Voracious

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Voracious

by Seaneta

Summary

Matthew Brown is obsessed with the Chesapeake Ripper, and is immensely pleased when he finds out the Ripper is going to be the newest patient at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Oh, and how perfect the Ripper is with his black-framed glasses and thick bushel of hair.

While Will Graham is too busy dealing with Hannibal's mind games, he doesn't notice another psychopath right under his nose.

Notes

Beverly is alive, as this takes place when Will is wrongfully imprisoned. Will's team is semi-confident he is innocent (but they don't necessarily suspect Lecter).

This is an aside story to 'Ravenous'. You don't have to read that to understand this story. Ravenous is more of a snippet of this plot-line as a whole, as it focuses on one private session between Will and Hannibal.

Chapter 1

When Matthew Brown heard the notorious Chesapeake Ripper was coming to the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, he made the necessary preparations. He had already played charades enough to earn the title of *head nurse*, one of few along the staff in the hospital. Now it was just a matter of being at the right place at the right time -show Frederick Chilton how at ease he was when working in the maximum security branch, how loyal and diligent he was as an employee, how devoted he was to any of his boss's requests.

Watching the young man exit the van, surrounded with security personnel, was surreal to Matthew.

He watched, star-struck, on the front steps, his mouth unable to hide a small gasp. He had been so *silly*. Of course all those crimes were committed by such a man. Just look at him. And, *boy*, did Matthew look.

He cataloged the Ripper's wrinkled flannel, how the untucked edges hid the languid sway of his steps. His khakis were loose, day-old creases lining them and in desperate need of a good wash. Matthew licked his lips, imaging laundry day already-- just smothering his face into a handful of the man's clothes. He knew he wore an undershirt under that fleece, probably boxers too that were just as dirty as the rest of him.

Dirty boy. Maybe his nipples matched that light pink of his lips. Matthew envisioned them just as soft as those lips, both of them puckering just for him. *Oh, oh, oh* --and the Chesapeake Ripper wore glasses, too. Matthew looked at the small black frames lining those eyes. They were much too small for the man's face, distracting from his hazel irises. Maybe the Ripper liked that, maybe he didn't like *them* looking directly at him. Matthew studied the way the man approached the hospital's front doors, his gaze cast down, and considered maybe it was the opposite; that the man didn't like looking at *others*.

Matthew fantasized that he was fucking the Ripper from behind, stealing his glasses and wearing them himself. Maybe he could look through the lenses and see what the man did when he killed. He'd love to pick that brain, learn his tips and tricks. The things Ripper could teach him when he wasn't fucking him into the ground. He would have to fuck him eventually, just to know what it felt like to be inside the Chesapeake Ripper.

He could become the new Ripper by dethroning this man. He'd take a place by his side, of course, them killing together in an intimacy only shared with knowing smiles, smiles that meant they weren't alone anymore.

"You're late." Dr. Chilton chirped, not bothering to return the chief of security's hand. His hands stayed clasped along the head of his cane.

With a sharp nod, Matthew wasted no time. He took a step away from his supervisor's side, holding up the handcuffs the Ripper would be wearing for the rest of his life --assuming the trial would convict him, but everybody already knew the verdict just as they knew the sky was blue.

Matthew didn't smile, he just went through the standard motions of securing the steel cages around slender wrists. His hands were sweaty from his frenzied thoughts. *Oh god,* he wanted to smile. He wanted to embrace the man and never let him go, ask him how he killed all those people, why he killed, if he could ever help. He wanted the Ripper to see him for what he truly was, he wanted to see the Ripper's own eyes lit up with elation, knowing he wasn't the only one. Oh, his eyes.

They were still downcast, but Matthew could see the forest-green and ocean-blue coloring, deep and mysterious like an uncharted section of a rainforest filled with monsters people have never seen. But Matthew would see them. He wanted to see all the monsters that lurked behind those dark tresses of hair. This close, he could see small freckles lining the upper half of his nose and spreading out just halfway under those bottom lashes. Wow.

The man looked up at him, and Matthew realized he had taken just the slightest of pauses to stare. How embarrassing. He tightened the clasps around those dainty wrists --oh, how he'd love to see him in action. To watch him kill some nurse he purposely sent inside his cell--, then nodded back at Chilton.

Immediately, the welcoming party turned around and led their star patient through the doors of the hospital. A barricade of policemen lined the bottom of the marble steps, getting blinded by the near-constant flashes of cameras and growing deaf from reporters shouting questions aimed at both Frederick Chilton and the Ripper.

"*Will Graham, do you feel-*"

"*-are you guilty, Mr. Graham*?"

Will, Will, Will*iam*, *Will*iam-

Will Graham would be the only ex-FBI agent in the hospital who was also an inmate. Maybe that was why Dr. Chilton seemed so enraptured by the new patient.

Matthew watched as the two spoke to each other under their breaths. Will, Will Graham, the man kept his eyes stubbornly down as Frederick stared nothing short of daggers toward him. Matthew couldn't help but feel the sharp pangs of jealousy already creep inside of him. It seemed his boss already knew Will fairly well. Matthew wanted the chance to know him too.

Never before had there ever been such a violent man in American history. Oh, the articles his boss would write on Will. Matthew would read every one. Study them like a preteen with a love letter, memorizing. He had to know his Ripper inside and out.

For the first time of what was to be many, Matthew Brown led the Chesapeake Ripper into his cell. Both of them ignored the taunts from neighboring patients. The increasingly intriguing man seemed lost in his own world of memories, completely detached from everything around him. Matthew would allow that for now, a new environment was always a tad overwhelming. It took himself a few months to grow comfortable enough in the hospital to even begin to mimic typical nurse behaviors.

He turned around to look at the Ripper, the young, delicious man, Will Graham, one last time, as the door locked behind him. He watched the man as he examined his new room, tentatively looking around, probably wondering if a bed and toilet were his only belongings now.

“Enjoy your stay, Mr. Graham.”

Maybe for a man like Matthew Brown, love didn’t exist in his vocabulary. But he felt a feeling akin to it deep in his chest, burrowing a hole and refusing to leave.

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He didn’t talk to Will the first few days.

He couldn’t.

He wanted to let his eyes do the exploring, get himself acquainted with his physical presence first. Just his senses grow used to his smell, his very presence. Matthew always found himself easily overwhelmed.

As planned, Dr. Chilton designated Matthew to be Will Graham’s designated nurse-on-duty, or NOD. He smiled at him every morning, slipping a tray of what was considered breakfast through the door. He was the one to dress Will up in that lovely straightjacket and face-mask when folks from the FBI would request his presence outside the building. Oh, *god* he loved seeing that notice on the staffroom’s calendar. A day where he’d get to smell Will’s hair, where he’d get wrap to his arms around him to clasp the straps --and pretend it was an embrace-- was all he needed to make up for the fact he wouldn’t see Will for the rest of the day.

He was the one to give him all his meals, in fact, and sometimes he’d linger to watch him take the first few bites. Will probably considered it a precaution, just to make sure he was eating, but Matthew just wanted to watch his mouth open, watch the mush land on his little pink tongue.

He never worked the night shifts, but sometimes when Dr. Chilton requested new bugged wires to be adjusted or rearranged, Matthew would sneak a private viewing at the security base. He reversed the tapes until catching footage of Will sleeping through the night vision. He was a heavy sleeper, and messy one, sweat easily visible even through the shitty camera. It was a shame though, he wore the jumpsuit even while sleeping. Despite the heat and sweat.

God, he just couldn’t get enough.

In the Baltimore State Hospital, the only outlet for any privacy was a patient’s own cell. For Will Graham, it was the opposite. While in his room, he only got a constant influx of visitors. And because he was considered the facility’s most dangerous patient, the most unstable, he utilized all the building’s accommodations without any other inmates. Special adjustments had to be constantly made. Getting fresh air was a planned occasion, one that only happened when there were no group therapy sessions outside, or meditating patients, or even gardeners.

Will had to get transferred through the halls when no other patients were exiting or leaving another area. The shower room was the same situation.

It was communal, awfully large, almost resembling a gym locker room if it wasn't for the private stalls lining the tiled walls. There were shower heads located throughout, but the concealed stalls were for the more violently-inclined. Bolted hooks were attached inside the stalls, so any inmate could still easily be restrained but still have the luxury of a cleaning. And because Will Graham wore those navy jumpsuits all the time, this was the only place Matthew Brown could really see him.

Oh, yes.

It was like a bathroom stall, but missing its door, and Matthew Brown had the most perfect view of the Ripper's backside. He would watch hands lather pale skin in cheap soap, watch every detail because he was paid to. Matthew had to make sure he wouldn't try anything funny, like break out of his handcuffs and make a naked run for the closest exit. Or, perhaps, try to kill himself by drinking the non-alcoholic shampoo. It was for his safety and the staff's.

Matthew Brown watched Will's hands massage his arms, what had to be that firm chest, his stomach, those thighs and legs. His hair laid in a pile on at the top of his head, full of suds and looking like some sort of stylish slick do. Seeing that delicate neck stretch up, gving him goosebumps each time Will stacked those dark locks of hair up. Will wasn't ashamed of washing in front of someone, as evident by his erect posture and the bold way he announced his need for a towel while looking at Matthew over his shoulder.

God, it was maddening.

He made the conscious decision to speak to Will the next day.

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He stared at Will Graham. He watched him as he took the tray laying on his cell floor, stood back up, then walk back to sit at his usual spot on the mattress. The meal resting on his lap, Will ate in small bites. If he was curious as to why Matthew continued to stand in front of the room, Will didn't show it.

"My name is Matthew Brown."

Fingers popped another scrambled egg into his mouth, utensils something that only existed outside the criminally insane hospital. If he hadn't heard his own voice echo off the barren walls, Matthew would have thought he never said a thing.

He waited until Will flung another yellow piece past those addicting lips.

"How did it feel? When they died? Did you watch?" He caught himself, tried to simmer his eager eyes.

Will had stopped chewing, and, wonderfully, Matthew couldn't believe it, he actually *turned his head to face him*. Eye contact was definitely an issue, even more so after his glasses were

confiscated, but Will looked at his chest. It was something. A great start.

“You can tell me,” Matthew smiled, leaning against the railings for a more intimate touch. He wanted Will to know that he was on his side. “I have access to the tapes. The audio. I can cut out whatever I want before Dr. Chilton would ever know.”

He watched those lips pull into a frown. Will went back to his food, picking at the bits of toast.

“Maybe I was got ahead of myself. You’re Will Graham. You’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

He swallowed. “No. I’m not.”

The game Will played was interesting. He clutched a bar tighter in his grip. Will’s voice was so beautiful, rough and delicate. A perfect but rare mix of a killer and a lover.

“Lots of people think you are. They found human hair of some of the victims in your own house.”

Again, Will turned to face Matthew. This time his eyes went high enough to meet his neck. A shiver rolled up his spine. It felt as though he had to keep himself anchored with the railings or else he’d float away from euphoria.

“So, how did it feel?”

“While working for the agency, I did it to save others.”

“Did you save them?”

A flash in Will’s eyes, like an unexpected memory. “Some.”

Matthew leaned closer, words becoming whispers. “So? How did it feel? When they died?”

Will cleared his throat.

He watched as Will took his time sipping the small paper cup of water. He coughed again, looking away.

“I felt…powerful. And I regret it.”

“The kills? Or what you felt?”

God, this was like watching a movie he waited all summer for. Like waiting in line for hours for that split second of getting a celebrity photo. He felt his mind throwing out every useless thing before meeting Will Graham, making room for every detail he had to remember. He needed daydreams to fulfill the hours he wasn’t right there, standing before him in active conversation.

“Felt. I felt like the killers I hunted.”

Matthew smiled. “It’s nice to feel like a force to be reckoned with, doesn’t it? The feeling of life leaving in your hands.”

When Will turned to look at him, *really* look at him, he knew he finally caught his attention. Now there was no going back. Will would remember him. The moment those hazel orbs met his, he felt his cock twitch.

“When did the patients become the personnel?”

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It was the start of something Matthew had never experienced.

His aunt tried to raise him as best as a bitter old cow could, her ovaries long dried up and fond of reminding him “*if I had kids, they’d never be like you*”.

Matthew had friends growing up, learning to fake friendliness early on as a child, but he kept his distance from relationships until college. There he had met David, Hannah, and Jackie. He couldn’t help himself, before them it had only ever been animals. David was his messiest, his awkward first time. Twice the man managed to partially escape, and Matthew had nearly ran out of mace to spray him in the eyes. It was a learning experience. Authorities found the mangled body after David’s girlfriend had opened a closet door and it came tumbling out on top of her. It had been sexually assaulted, but for whatever reason, that little tidbit was never mentioned in the new articles.

Next came Hannah. Hannah, Hannah he had met in the library. Her hair reminded him of fire, and he smiled at the image. He used her for firewood in the winter of his sophomore year.

Jackie was even more perfect. She told Matthew she “*liked how weird*” he was. She was weird, too, she said. Matthew didn’t understand her screams when he greeted her one night in her house just off campus property. He had killed that annoying roommate for her, dragged the body into one of the dining room chairs and dressed it for Jackie’s last dinner with her. When Jackie tried to grab a knife, when she tried to call 911, he realized she wasn’t weird like him at all. Angry at her for lying, her death had been his most violent to date.

Will Graham was weird. He was just his type of weird.

It wasn’t necessarily against any rules to interact with the patients, after all, what were nurses for? But Matthew still had to make sure he wasn’t raising any alarm bells with coworkers or Frederick Chilton by talking to his number one Ripper *too* much.

So he kept it limited to their meals. Even more so when he had to transfer Will to one of the private rooms, or an open cage in the atrium. Will always controlled the conversations with his sideways glances and stiff responses. It seemed he only knew how to grunt and growl most days, but Matthew would take anything he gave him.

It was always after a particular guest on Thursdays that Will was a bit snippier than the other times he’d give the Ripper his dinner. These evenings held a special place for him because he was so different, certainly not as pliant or passive as he usually was around him.

“Hawks are very intelligent creatures.”

Will visibly exhaled from the comment. He slid the tray of stale food off his lap, and rubbed his eyes. Even in the dim corridor light, he could see the way Will’s hair brushed passed his ears. There had been talk about cutting it when he first arrived, reason being he could pull it out and choke on it. That it could be a health hazard if he wasn’t able to shower often, which, at times, was a problem.

Matthew was glad they didn’t. It looked better framing his face than it would have in a plastic baggie somewhere in his apartment.

He leaned against the railings, taking Will’s silence as an invitation. “Mix sharp vision with smarts, and you get a great hunter. They’re also solitary things, scared away by smaller birds... But if…” He cocked his head, smiling wider when Will looked his way, “If they work together, the hawks could remain dominant. I think we’re both hawks, Will.”

He looked at Matthew almost doubtfully, the width of his eyes narrowing just enough for him to notice. “Even in pairs, the larger bird is governing.”

He laughed. “In domesticity, there is a hierarchy. I respect that.”

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Matthew Brown entered Dr. Chilton’s office with some reserve, naturally a little upset his morning routine had been interrupted with the sudden call. His boss wasn’t at his desk, and Matthew had to turn around to find the man lounging along his couch already, his laptop teetering on his thighs.

“Good morning, Dr. Chilton. You called for me?” He approached the couch swiftly, purposely glancing at the monitor before the other man could minimize the window. He had been watching the footage of Will’s cell. With a soft grunt, no doubt caused by the scar along his abdomen, Frederick placed the device on the neighboring coffee table. He shifted on the plush couch and came to a relaxed slouch.

“Brown, I have a request to ask of you.” Matthew felt his heart stutter. “When you give Mr. Graham his breakfast today, I want you remain at his cell. He’ll probably be feeling a little under the weather once he ingests his eggs.”

“Am I transferring him somewhere?” In extreme cases, patients showing hostile tendencies were sedated before entering their cell. But from what he seen on the security tape and knowing Will had yet to ever be drugged, Matthew knew this request wasn’t exactly protocol. That didn’t stop him from pretending for Chilton’s sake.

His superior looked over his shoulder at Matthew. “Once you’re sure he’s oblivious, call for me.”

Matthew glanced at the books sprawled along the coffee table when he was sure Frederick wouldn’t notice. Books on hypnosis, the subconscious. He knew the doctor had an intensive

expertise in those areas, so his morning must have been just a quick refresher for something to come.

“Would you like him put in restraints before he wakes back up?”

Oh, the thought of placing the jacket on Will’s limp, normally lethal body, made his palms start sweating.

“There will be no need.” He waved dismissively. “He’ll be awake, though groggy and detached.”

Matthew looked at the grandfather clock to his side. It was soon time for Chilton’s regularly scheduled appointment with Will. “Alright. No problem. He won’t remember anything?”

“No.” Chilton stood, grabbing his cane. He limped his way back over to his desk, giving Matthew a friendly pat on the back. “Not a thing.”

Maybe that would be advantageous for his boss, but it would be for Matthew too.

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He had to steady the tremors in his hands as he slipped the tray of food through the slot in the bars. He had to inconspicuously wipe the sweat from his palms against his stark white pants as Will walked back to his cot. In just a few minutes those legs wouldn’t be able to carry his weight anymore. He’d be conscious, but completely out of it. A body without the mind.

“Good morning, Will.” He gave his usual greeting, but not the usual departure. Instead, he leaned against the wall across the hallway, watching as Will picked at his toast.

In his morning dishevel, the top bottom of his jumpsuit was unclasped, showing even more of the damp t-shirt underneath. His hair sported the classic case of bedhead, combs only available to him after showers. As he chewed the yellow pieces of egg, there was a moment Matthew noticed his tongue searching for the subtle, but new flavoring. Will's hands stilled on either side of his lap when he swallowed. Just when he thought Will figured it out, fingers plucked another scrambled bite and popped it past his lips.

Matthew crossed his arms together as he watched, glancing at his wristwatch to gauge how long it would take until-

The tray clattered to the floor. He sprung from the wall, eyeing Will as he stood in the center of his cell. Panicked eyes stared as Will trembled, feeling his pulse point. He stumbled before landing on his knees.

“W-what-”

Matthew jingled the keys in his hand, walking toward the door and opening it. Will shuffled back, hitting the bunk before managing to pull himself on top of it.

“What did you-”

Will's hands came up to hold his own head, his breathing suddenly sharp and quick. Matthew cautiously closed in on the man, and the bed groaned from the added weight. Will tried to ball himself in the corner, like some terrified pup. It was invigorating to have the control now, for Will to be the one unsure of Mathew's next move. He would have preferred it to be without any sort of disabling drug, but he'd take what he could get.

He cupped a hand under Will's chin, pushing him up to face him. His eyes were foggy, unfocused. Cheeks were red and breathing evened out.

"What…"

If he didn't know a hypnotic drug was rampaging through Will's system, Matthew would have thought he was simply in a state between sleep and waking up. Matthew slowly moved his other hand along the frame of his face, inching towards those lips of the person he had ever truly noticed. Weak protests didn't deter him. Will wouldn't remember this anyhow. He traced the lightly chapped lips, going over a particularly rough spot in the middle, before plunging down. With his other hand, he pressed into Will's back and scooted closer to him.

Will was sandwiched between the wall and Matthew, breathing softly with rolling eyes. Matthew would have to remember to erase this little snippet from the security tape. His hand sank below the jumpsuit, feeling the firmness of the man's chest. He licked his lips, hands trembling in frenzy to touch, touch, touch. He could feel the hard, smooth muscles underneath the t-shirt. He sighed when he pressed the body against him, greedy for the flesh and desperate for more. The distant, unapproachable Will was replaced with one so helpless, powerless, so delightfully ready to be used.

His cock was already impossibly hard from the incredible circumstance he found himself in.

He looked at Will's parted lips again, begging to be kissed and smothered. His heart pounded and he cradled Will's head with both his hands, supporting his limp weight. He leaned in and forced their mouths to meet, shoving his tongue inside for any and all tastes of Will he could possibly get. His hands moved about as if they had a mind of their own, touching and prodding. Tugging up Will's sleeves, he saw the bruises there from uncaring guards, probably from one in particular whose cousin had been a victim of the Chesapeake Ripper.

"What's going…on….I feel…"

Matthew wiped the sweat beading against his hairline, *when did it get so hot*? Possessive hands continued to travel over Will's smaller frame, admiring the jut of his hips and the indents of his nipples. He knew time was running out. It didn't take Will thirty minutes to eat a meal.

He kissed him one more time, making it last, and set him gently along the bed as though he was getting ready to go to sleep.

Will tried to open his eyes, fingers were trying to grasp at something --reality, most likely. Matthew tenderly buttoned up his jumpsuit.

"What…I don't…"

The idea of having touched him so thoroughly before Chilton could ravage his mind amused Matthew. The thought of having this man, this impossibly beautiful and perfect man at his use drove Matthew to a new height of ecstasy. Will wasn't just for Chilton to keep, he didn't solely belong to the FBI as their little prized pet, and he most certainly wasn't under the exclusive care of some visiting psychiatrist. So many people wanted Will Graham for his mind, explore or change it. Matthew didn't want to change a thing about him. He only wanted to touch. He spent more than enough time looking and listening.

He patted down Will's hair as best he could, and traced those lips. Before leaving, he made sure to make adjustments to his own trousers. He desperately hoped Dr. Chilton would have a successful exploration. He looked toward to another morning like this one.

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…Or maybe not.

"Quiet today, huh?"

Will continued to walk the guided path around the courtyard, eyeing the bees hovering over obnoxiously colorful flowers. Everything about the patio was unbearably pristine and groomed, nothing like the forest that surrounded him in Wolf Trap. Here, if he managed to trip over his ankle chains, it would land him on cushioned tar that served as a makeshift sidewalk. Even the trees were tidied, certain branches cut away as to not persuade people to climb them or hang off the bark. Not even squirrels or other rodents would bother with this sad excuse of fresh air. It was a waste of a so-called stroll, even if it felt good for his muscles to work.

The heavy, tall walls made it difficult for sweeping breezes to cool the sweat against his neck. It also made the square he was in much more prominent. It was hard to pretend this was Wolf Trap, difficult to daydream he was fishing in a stream.

"Is it something you'd like to talk about?" Matthew kept trying for conversation. It had been two weeks since Dr. Chilton ordered Will's breakfast to be drugged different days of the week, throughout the week. Although Will never remembered what happened during those displaced hours, he knew he lost time. In response to the situation, because he could never anticipate a pattern of the dosage, Will started to refuse his meals. And now, apparently, he was refusing to even grunt in Matthew's general direction. It had been certainly worth it to drug him. But why now, why *him* did Will suddenly choose to ignore?

It wasn't fair. He deserved Will's attention. He was his caretaker.

"I can tell you which days the food is drugged. You can trust me."

Will kept walking ahead of him, the chains rattling against each other with each ample step. Matthew held onto the system of chains like a leash, and now he wasn't that afraid to use it to his advantage. He yanked, hard.

"Hey. Come on, now. I thought we were on the same page here."

Will's body jerked from the sharp tug, and he stopped walking. There was a tense moment of silence before Will asked, "What is Chilton giving me?"

His voice was *so clear*, crisp. He was really *speaking* to him, not just in vocal sounds or fragmented sentences. Matthew recovered from the surprise.

"What? Estazolam? He gives it to you to induce some kind of hypnotic state. Makes it easier to ask you questions without a word filter. You know, like word vomit." He watched as Will's body became rigid. Will still refused to turn around and look at him. Maybe it was because of the eye thing, but Matthew began to suspect Will just didn't want him to see him shaken up.

"You're an awfully hard guy to read, Will. The doc has to make the necessary adjustments to your treatment."

A few moments passed without either of them saying anything. Matthew cocked his head when he was sure a full minute passed, but then the other man was off again, continuing his steady pace around the block. Security cameras followed them both attentively, guards posted at every corner of the garden reading a newspaper or eating lunch. Matthew couldn't help but give the man a good yank now and again, testing his limits.

"Come on, if you talk to me I'll tell you the days for next week. You can eat again without becoming a puppet."

Still, he continued to walk. Matthew glared. All the other guards openly despised Will and happily gave him bruises when they could. He had been the only one to see Will's greatness, his beauty, his perfection. Why was Will treating him like all the others?

After five more evenly spaced yanks, Will finally fell into the rubber. Matthew cut the stroll around the park short.

He shoved Will into the cell without a friendly goodbye, deciding to just leave the cuffs around his wrists and ankles on. The night nurse could take care of it. He marched down the hall, slamming the hallway door shut behind him. Maybe if Will knew just how easy he had always made it for him, Willwould come crawling back to him, talking to him like never before.

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He made no effort to radio security. He didn't pick up the phone to address a possible breech of procedure. He sniffled a little, but that was just from allergies.

Instead, the volume actually increased. The screen stayed visible on his monitor. The high definition footage of Will Graham getting smashed into the cell wall didn't cause one flinch of an eye.

With the help of his cane, he continued to move about his office, gathering the necessary information for a federal consultant in regards to an incoming patient. His limp was hardly noticeable anymore, the scar along his abdomen a tangled mess of tender tissue both bumpy and smooth. He picked a folder from the G-section in the cabinet, tapping it closed in tune to

the smacking sound through the computer's speakers. He glanced over at the screen. Will had been put into the proper restraints under the guise of a routine cell inspection. He was now sitting on the floor, back against the wall, listening to a man above him bark so loudly Chilton could see spit fly through the screen.

The perpetrator was Wilson, a huge man that gave Will a glare before he shoved his hands against the other's shoulder, pushing him back several inches.

"*Aren't you a pretty Ripper, eh*?" The sneer wafted through Chilton's speakers. "*Turns out your just another cocksucker, aren't you*?"

Wilson rolled the trunk of his neck, waiting for the snap that echoed from his bones. His face was inches from Will's, saliva trickling down his chin. Menacing eyes radiated rage and violence. He wanted a reaction from Will, like many orderlies wanted. The lingering guards at the cell's entrance surrounded the pair, anticipating a response from Will Graham.

But Will only dipped his head, avoiding Todd's eyes. He stepped to the side, trying to walk around him, but the large man grabbed his shoulder and slammed him back, pinning him against the wall. He lifted his other fist, ready to break Will's jaw, but his opponent remained vigilant, completely still and absorbing every second that passed.

He didn't move. Didn't say a single word.

Chilton watched, curious, as Wilson stuck him directly in his gut. Then he pulled another folder and tossed them both on his desk. He'd allow the treatment for now. Will had made him desperate enough to seek Dr. Lecter's help with Will's health. He had made the situation clear enough. Maybe too embarrassingly clear. In order to ensure Will wouldn't starve, Chilton had to cease his sessions with him. He knew Lecter had a particular method when dealing with the stubborn man, probably worked out the kinks the first few months in his own office. Chilton didn't understand it.

"What is Hannibal Lecter to you, Will?"

His head rolled, having a difficult time carrying the weight. "Um, professionally? Professionally. He's a doctor."

"What about unprofessionally, Will? Who is Hannibal beyond the paperwork?"

The man adjusted his jumpsuit, fiddling with the top button.

Chilton grimaced. During their entire session, Will had yet to properly look at him. The rest of his defenses were down; his posture open, mouth spilling thoughts without thinking, heart slow and steady.

"An…elegant monster."

" What do you mean?"

"The moment he meets anyone, the strings are set. He makes puppets out of people." Will fidgeted in his seat, contorting his face from an apparent headache; just one of the few nasty

side effects from the drug. "Why do you think I'm here?"

"Why do you *think you're here?"*

" Because it took me too long to see. To see what he was." A shuddering breath.

From his hunched position, Chilton couldn't see Will's face. He set the notebook down on his lap. He leaned forward, his posture perking.

"Yes, Will?"

He looked up at the doctor, eyes red and shoulders quaking. "I want to go back to my room."

- - -

He watched him. That's all he did anymore. Just like when the Ripper first came to the hospital. Will walked with a rigid back and his steps were careful. Matthew studied him as he followed, closely, behind in the hallway. Will looked to be examining the distance of his own stride, making sure no step was too wide. Matthew knew he was hiding a limp. The mandatory checkup hadn't been mandatory at all, and the guard in charge had ulterior motives the moment he barged into the room and promptly punched a jab to Will's stomach. In the straightjacket, the man couldn't put up much of a fight. And Matthew refused to acknowledge the commotion down the hall, knowing his word against security wouldn't carry its weight.

If the guards found themselves tied to meat hooks, watching their blood drip off their toes and into a drain, maybe his words would mean something then.

He led the other man in a small room and Matthew hooked Will to the cold table. He checked the fastener, then watched Will slide onto the bench. They went through the motions in a fluid fashion, the private room something they both grew used to twice every week. Sometimes more. When Matthew noticed a visitor requesting the private room for a third time, he decided to look into the details a little more. It was odd.

The cages in the atrium were much more practical, casual, and easier to transfer the patient into. A *room* typically meant more personal conversations. Over the years, Matthew had seen family members or significant others use the space, but *never* a patient's therapist. He wrinkled his nose at the thought. *Chilton* was Will's doctor. What made this guy so special that his boss gave him exclusive rights to Will, in an unrecorded room no less? Did Will even *talk* to him? Matthew couldn't imagine such a thing happening. Even while taking a beating earlier, Will refused to give the guard any sort of satisfaction by responding to his taunts. Dr. Chilton had to lace the man's food just to hear words.

He gave Will one last once-over before leaving. Will's shoulders were arched over, hands in a dead grasp on the table. It was his eyes though that always made Matthew curious. Before every session, it seemed, Will was a little nervous. There was apprehension in his eyes, even if Will thought he trained his body not to show it. The anxiety was always gone once the hour was up. Through the thick walls, Matthew had no idea why.

Today, though, would be different.

Matthew leaned against the wall outside the room with crossed arms, humming a random tune until that familiar set of footsteps echoed down the hall. He turned his head and looked this time, really looked. The block on the schedule said *Dr. Hannibal Lecter - 6:00pm*.

Strong name attached to an apparently strong person. Nice suit, nice shoes, nice hair. Everything was so *nice*.

Poised, near intimidating in the hallway as he walked down the middle of it. Like all the sessions before, the psychiatrist carried with him a brown paper bag. Security was always stern with their bag checks before visitation would be allowed. Matthew, however, never knew what was hidden inside.

They both gave short but friendly nods toward each other as Matthew opened the door for him. He closed it immediately after, staring at the hatch just an inch below his eye level. It'd be so easy to just slide it open and peek through. He knew a protective layer of glass was in the hatch, making it impossible to slip anything through, even words.

Matthew glanced at the small red dot on the camera in the corner of the hallway. Well, maybe he didn't need to open the hatch. Leaning back against the wall, he pressed an ear toward the foundation and tried to quiet his breathing. Nothing came through except vague muffles. There were definitely two voices.

Matthew threw himself off from the wall, pacing. Dr. Chilton wouldn't care if he peeked. He could easily argue he heard something suspicious, thought that maybe Will managed to escape his handcuffs, maybe things sounded ugly. He knew how to bullshit the paperwork.

Minutes passed.

Their sessions were only an hour long. He was losing out on time the longer he stalled. More voices. *Will was talking.*

Matthew slowly opened the hatch and peered inside.

It was a gateway to another dimension.

That's what Matthew believed the second his eyes adjusted to the strange shadows and almost blueish tint to the room. The mystery of the brown bag was spread out along the table in small plastic containers, condensation beneath the lids hinting at warm food. Hands hitting the table made the plastic rattle, trembling fingers smearing perspiration. Shadows loomed on the other side of the table. Matthew seriously considered the idea of a strange new dimension the moment his eyes caught Will apparently in the middle of something rather private with his therapist.

Matthew never considered the idea of Will having routines with people other than him. But only minutes had passed since he closed the door for Dr. Lecter, and already the pair looked to be deep in something disturbingly familiar. A burning in Matthew's chest grew as he watched the rare display of Will's consent. It *had* to be a different Will. He wanted to believe

he was drugged, that he was as compliant as Dr. Chilton made him, because that was the *only* way anyone could ever have him.

Will stood as best he could within the strain of the chains, leaning over the table with spread hands. He was posed like he was enduring a procedural frisk, but Lecter was no officer of the law. The top-half of the jumpsuit was unbuttoned, draped down over Will's hips. Hands bunched the white t-shirt up of his back, exposing purple bruises on pale skin. Will stared at the wall in front of him, desperate to maintain any sort of composure.

Matthew didn't understand why. Will was not openly protesting the unwelcomed touch, verbally opposing his therapist's apparent care. Will wasn't drugged, as Chilton made him. His eyes were vibrant and wide, very aware of the present.

"Breathe deeply, Will."

A hand pressed into a hipbone. Will hissed and his fingers tried to dig themselves into the table.

"Shh. This one, here."

"Two days. Ago." Dr. Lecter's fingers pressed deeper into the bruised flesh. "*Hahh*-" A hit from the side. "D-don't-"

"Your pain is my pain."

"Is that the closest thing to an apology you can manag-*Ah*!"

The man Matthew had welcomed in the hallway wasn't the same man in the room. Eyes glittering venomously, Dr. Lecter looked positively demonic. He was a predator behind Will, one who took pleasure governing the man. Everyone did in the hospital, but it was only a layer deep. Inside the room was completely different. Dr. Lecter seemed to draw responses from Will no one else could. And Will was *letting* him. Matthew had to drug him to get close, and this guy could just say stop breathing and Will would comply.

Dr. Lecter paused, tilting his head at the outburst. "Tender?"

Will bit his bottom lip when the man purposely pressed into an area of Will's back again.

"I see no discoloration. This happened a short time ago."

Matthew watched as Will hung his head, hair falling on either side of his face. Heavy pants filled the room.

"Will."

There was the man Matthew knew. The passive aggressive, silent-

The sudden bang was muffled through the door, but it still sent a shock through Matthew as he watched. Will's therapist bent him over the table even more, *slamming* Will's head onto

the table and causing a few containers to fall to the floor. Will shouted, the shackles tearing skin. Hannibal pressed into the flourishing bruise again.

“Weigh your options, Will. You cannot avoid me in this hospital. You never will."

Will grunted, heaving for air. "Like...sticking a butterfly...on a pin so it won't...fly away." He breathed. "You framed me both literally...and figuratively."

Matthew caught the glance Will took at the plastic boxes, his face squashed between the table and the large hand of his own doctor. Dr. Lecter must have given him an ultimatum over the food, for whatever reason. *Let me touch you….and you won’t have to eat?*

Matthew knew Will rarely ate anything he gave him anymore, so why would Will continue to deny his stomach?

Dr. Lecter only pressed even harder against Will, earning him a low whine.

“A few hours ago. During cell inspection,” Will whispered, much to Matthew’s distaste. Dr. Lecter pressed against the bruise hard enough to make one of his own. Will grunted again. “T-Todd Wilson.”

The head of the security staff, Wilson had a well-known grudge against Will Graham. Ever since he was convicted of the Ripper’s crimes, Wilson tried to make Will’s life a living hell behind these walls. It was all Wilson ever talked about, seeing as he was a relative of one of the Ripper’s victims. The man was annoying, vulgar. Really, just making Matthew’s job at earning Will’s respect and trust even harder.

“Thank you.” Dr. Lecter released his stronghold on Will, backing away and rounding the table to the other side.

Will immediately lifted himself up, glaring as he pulled his shirt back down and shoved the jumpsuit back on.

Matthew watched the display of unfiltered anger and bottled rage. Oh, if those chains weren’t there, Will would lunge over the table. He’d claw his own doctor’s eyes out. Strangle him with his handcuffs. He was *alive*, glaring at the doctor with heavy breathes and flushed cheeks. Every inch of Will’s skin was on fire, like Matthew’s chest.

He watched with lips pressed flat, a slight growl threatening in his throat, at the sight of Will he just never experienced before. He was utterly feral. Matthew only got a tame housecat, slowly blinking and forever shrugging. It was frustrating. Even though Will was the one behind bars and wearing the shackles, it was always *him* in control of Matthew. Will chose when to talk to him, even look at him. Will held the strings. But with this guy, *Dr. Lecter*, the man could threaten something like unmediated food and Will would fall at his goddamn feet.

Dr. Lecter picked up the fallen food containers. “No need to scowl. Physical healing helps the mind as well. Your bruises should subside in a few days.”

Lecter flicked his gaze up at Will as he prepared two meals. One was plainly absent of meat. “And there will not be new ones.”

“Do you expect me to say thank you?” Will gave a bitter laugh as Dr. Lecter passed a plate toward him.

The man just shook his head. His lips curved into a barely-contained grin of what seemed to be satisfaction. “Just to eat.”

- - -

The moment the hour was up, the door opened.

The therapist had always been punctual, which surprised Matthew, now that he knew what Lecter did in there. Matthew wouldn’t have accounted for time with Will like that, when Will was restrained and aware, yet compliant.

The man stepped out of the room, looking just as he did entering 60 minutes ago; pristine and perfectly serene. Matthew returned the nod Dr. Lecter gave him, letting his eyes linger on the departing doctor down the hallway. He carried himself with a kind of aristocratic authority, something outdated but respected nonetheless. He looked expensive, someone a commoner couldn’t look at without paying some sort of fee. With that kind of self-assurance, it was no wonder Will felt compelled to obey the man. Matthew had read the files. Dr Lecter was assigned to Will Graham when he worked under Special Agent Jack Crawford. Will never had a choice.

Intimidation seemed to work pretty well, though it didn’t for Todd Wilson earlier.

Matthew entered the room, hiding any kind of notion that he knew what went on there just minutes ago. He unhooked Will from the table, waited for him to get up, and together they walked back to his cell.

“The doc seems nice.”

There wasn’t a hitch in Will’s step. Not a sideways glance or even a flicker of a smile or grimace across his lips. “You see him often enough. Guess he has to be. Probably a nice break from reality for a little.”

Again, *nothing*. Lecter may be intimidating, but so was Wilson. That wasn’t enough, apparently, for Will. Physical harm did nothing for him. Yanks on his restraints weren’t going to do anything. Dr. Lecter had used bargaining. Threats.

A sudden, numinous understanding washed over Matthew then, as he watched the profile of Will’s head bob slightly with each step. He limped now, openly and unafraid, and Matthew knew it was because of that doctor. It was an overwhelming epiphany, one that made him eager and fearful to act on it at the same time.

He knew he’d never be able to have Will in this place, under constant surveillance and surrounded by small, annoying birds. Hawks needed open space, miles of opportunity and

copious amounts of time. Will would never see who Matthew really was unless he showed Will he was the real deal. Unless he could show Will he could be someone like Lecter, someone who understood what he needed.

He'd be Will's larger Hawk.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> A disturbing discovery is made, nobody hurts Will Graham and gets to brag about it, and Will realizes odd doesn't begin to explain his caretaker.

Working the third shift was bullshit.

Every evening, at six o'clock sharp, that's what Barney Matthews recited when swiping his timecard. The halls of the hospital were always quiet, except block B that housed Dillon Stevens, who was known for shouting gibberish throughout the nights. Because a skeleton crew worked, rarely did Barney get to pass the time with mindless conversation. The shift was always tiring because it was so boring. He knew that was a good thing, better boring than busy, but his complaint was still valid. It was difficult to stay awake most nights, and it just seemed get more difficult as he got older.

"Base to Matthews."

Barney shoved the mop bucket into the closet, already frustrated from the clutter made by the day crew. Now he had to deal with some jackass in security, probably asking about the clogged toilet on the second floor again.

He walked back out to his cart, rummaging through the pile of towels for the radio.

"Go ahead base."

"Can you check on block D, room twelve? The cameras' acting strange from my angle."

The man looked up to where he knew the security camera was, eyeing it with a grumble and salute with his middle finger. Block D was on the complete opposite side of the building. Barney thought about complaining into the radio, but then he figured the errand could kill ten minutes at the least.

He didn't know the cell by name, only by section and from what he could remember of the hallway. As Barney made his way down the corridor, reading the numbers off from the markers, he realized room twelve was the cell on the very end. It was the one that housed the Ripper-guy. He frowned. Mr. Graham had never given him any problems before, but security sure had. Maybe this was all just a ruse to make him see their latest mistreatment of the man. Have him clean up the mess and make sure Graham was still breathing.

But Mr. Graham wasn't in his cell.

Barney peered inside, crouching get a view under the cot, and chanced a glance up at the ceiling. Hm. He turned around, eyeing the camera on the wall. It looked like it was cocked a little too far to the left. Security could probably only see less than half of the room.

“Matthews to Base.” He drawled. “Can you tell me who has Mr. Graham at this hour?” He checked his wrist watch while waiting for a response, noting it was almost past eleven o’clock. Typically, patients never went anywhere after seven. And eight o’clock was the standard lights out. If Todd Wilson worked, however, Barney was willing to bet his next paycheck the man found a nice, unsupervised hallway to pummel Mr. Graham-

“He's in his cell, Barn.”

“Yeah, well, he’s not there.” He gave a laugh. “Here.” Barney dragged a chair from the corner of the wall, stood on it, and fixed the camera. “See?”

There was a pause on the other end of the radio. An alarm went off throughout the entire building after.

- - -

Jack Crawford was the first to arrive on the scene. He let out a relieved sigh when he noticed that the building, at least on the outside, still looked dead and not whatsoever in a state of unprecedented panic. Chilton wasn’t good at a lot of things it seemed, but at least he took no precaution when it came to the possibility of bad press.

“All the patients have a schedule to follow. That schedule is every nurses’ bible, Jack. He didn’t just decide to get up and leave.”

Crawford looked at him with a stern expression. The office door was shut, but anyone within earshot could hear the heated exchange. “We found *nothing* in the room. We have *no* leads whatsoever. It looks a lot like Will just managed to open the door and walk out. Do you have anyone at the doors, Frederick?”

“Every door except the front are locked *and* alarmed. He has to still be inside the building. And my staff will find him. It’s only a matter of-”

“Your staff.” Jack took a few prominent steps closer to the other man, eyes narrowing with a sort of sudden understanding. “The camera was tilted? Just enough so no one had a good view of the cell?”

Frederick slowly nodded, grimacing. “If you’re insinuating my *own employees* had something to do with this, you’re more desperate for answers than I thought. You really can’t believe that Will Graham actively found a way to trick us both? That he really *is* what people call him?”

“And the door?” Jack ignored him. “Do your nurses know how to get around the building well enough, say, to disarm exit doors? Maybe make it look like they were transferring a patient when they were really helping one escape?”

The head of the hospital fumbled, watching as Jack pulled out his phone. “If you’re calling the media about my momentary lapse in judgment-”

“I’m calling reinforcements. In the meantime, how about you start interviewing your *staff*, Dr. Chilton, before asking them to help out with the issue. I’m sure Will made plenty of friends in this place just as he has made enemies.”

- - -

Will’s imagination was like a forest fire, unyielding to any attempts of dampening its strength as it rampaged through his memories. Random objects, forgettable environments, people he had only seen in passing at the academy were appearing clear in his mind, and it was difficult to see anything else.

Reality mixed with fantasy, or maybe it was just all one big dream. He couldn’t confirm if he was really sitting in Hannibal Lecter’s office, the walls replaced with a surrounding forest. Itchy twine encased his limbs against a chair. He felt the *too real* breeze from the woods, could count the stars through the clearing and into the night sky. And he undeniably saw Hannibal sitting in a chair before him.

He was turned to his side, looking into the forest; it seemed like his mind was elsewhere.

“Hannibal.” Will’s voice echoed, carrying strength, though his mouth had never opened.

He looked over at Will.

Where are we? What are we doing?

“It hurts.” He said instead, lowering his chin to his chest. He couldn’t close his eyes. “It hurts really bad.”

“The pain will go away.” The accent wasn’t there. The voice was lighter, nasally.

“Why am I in pain?”

“Because I hurt you.”

Will tried to push against the twine trapping his torso against the chair. “Why would you do that?”

“Stop talking, Ripper. Go to sleep.”

“I’m…I’m not the Ripper, Hannibal. You are.”

Finally the other man turned to face Will, looking at him questionably.

- - -

“There. Wait, back it up a few seconds.”

The security base at the Baltimore Hospital was taken over by Jack Crawford's team for little under a hour, FBI agents working diligently as more trickled inside and were briefed on any updates. Beverly stood in front of the monitors, eyes alert as she scanned every camera shot from the parking lot.

"Camera B." She pointed out to Brian, who reversed the tape by a few minutes. "There. It's a nurse. Looks like he's carrying something."

Both Brian and Alana stepped closer, trying to find what Beverly referred to. It was difficult, the blurry pixels on the screen straining their eyes, but it was definitely someone wearing white, a nurse, carrying something blue on a stretcher. Blue like a jumpsuit.

"Looks like he knew where every camera was…" Brain groaned, looking back at all monitors with the same timestamp. "He dodged all the others."

"But it matches the time frame," Alana said. "The camera in the hallway was moved at 10:32. That means he helped Will out of the cell and both of them were outside in fifteen minutes."

"It wouldn't take that long." Everyone turned to look at Jack as he marched his way through the doors.

"If I was in this hellhole, I'd run like hell too." Jim nodded, understanding. "And if Will Graham had been willing to leave, *conscious*, it'd probably take less than three minutes to hop on a stretcher and scoot away. Especially when you consider the distance between his cell and the closest exit."

"The connection…" Jack pointed to the blurry figure on the security feed, then tossed an empty syringe on the closest counter top. "Haloperidol."

"The antipsychotic?" Alana picked it up, disbelieving. "This is used to treat schizophrenia episodes. Extreme cases of Tourettes."

"It's also what every nurse here is equipped with for emergencies. In case a patient gets the jump on them."

"They use this as a *sedative*?"

"I don't get it." Beverly eyed the needle, "What exactly is Haloperidol?"

"It's fast acting, and it completely immobilizes the person injected." Jack rubbed his eyes, the mess just seemed to be getting messier. "When they do wake up, which could be *hours* later, they're delirious. Weak."

Brian turned back in his chair, looking at the stretcher the nurse apparently used to carry their once-coworker. "You think this escape was a surprise to Will?"

"The Chesapeake Ripper has many enemies. Some probably work in this hospital."

Alana stepped closer to Jack. "With Will currently in possession of the name, you think someone planned this. Drugged and took him right under every one's nose. He's going to kill

him."

"Katz, get Chilton." Jack directed. "Tell him to look at staff with relatives, friends, loved ones anyway involved in any Ripper case. Zeller, keep looking at the tapes on Will's cell. Go back weeks or months. Find anyone spending a little too much time around him. Price, get me what you can on the needle. Fingerprints, saliva, anything. Alana, I need you to look at any nurse that's *not* here in this building. Get a list of every one working yesterday. Nurses, janitors, repairmen. Find everybody."

"What are you going to do?"

"I have one more call to make."

- - -

The phone was set to silent, but that didn't stop him from noticing its lit screen and the name of a close colleague appearing in black, bold letters. He took the call, a bit uncomfortably, wedging the phone between his cheek and shoulder.

"Hello, Jack."

"Hannibal. Hope I'm not catching you asleep."

He withdrew his hands from the meat hook and stepped down from the chair in case his company should choose to speak through the gag. "Not at all. Is everything alright?"

"About two hours ago, a janitor discovered Will missing from his cell. He's not in the hospital."

A beat of silence. Hannibal felt his muscles tighten at each of Jack's words. "He escaped? By himself?"

"He was taken, we think, by one of the nurses."

Wearing the necessary, but itchy plastic covering, Hannibal turned slowly as to not make any noises. The pig, ready for its butcher, met Hannibal's gaze and immediately groaned, a plea that would go unanswered. Pressing the phone against his shoulder, Hannibal said, "*Quiet*," then turned his attention back to Jack.

His good spirits from before vanished. "That's very disconcerting. Do you have any leads?"

"We got a blurry image of someone wearing scrubs with a stretcher in the parking lot. Right now we're filing through employees. It feels like playing on the edge of a big haystack to find the needle."

Hannibal removed most of his tools from a small cart, placing the stainless steel scalpels and a flexible cord into one seamless pile for an easy clean up. He wouldn't be needing them anymore. Behind him, the hook groaned with its moving weight. "I'm glad you called, though I'm at a loss myself. I won't be of much help until I arrive at the hospital."

“That’s fine. I just need all the help I can get. You visited Will often. Was there anyone unusual you noticed?”

A calculating second. A menacing glance behind him. Hannibal supplemented a fixed gap in conversation, then, “There was a man, now that I think of it. Blond hair, tall. Working for security, he was in Will’s presence quite often, even while he was behind the bars. I vaguely recall his nametag....I believe his last name was Wilson.”

“Great. I’ll have Alana look into it.”

“I’ll be there soon, Jack.”

“I appreciate it.”

Hannibal set the phone on the counter, going over the change of plans in his head. Time was suddenly an issue as it wasn’t before, but thankfully his company hadn’t sustained critical injuries yet.

“Mr. Wilson,” he turned to face the hanging man, eyes burning with a consuming anger. “it seems there has been an extraordinary turn of circumstance for you.”

The man above him squirmed in the air, both legs tied with cable and his wrists restrained along the ceiling’s hook.

“I have to remove your gag, but if I were you, I wouldn’t ruin such an opportunity with vulgarities. You’re going to answer my questions truthfully, and without hesitation. Understood?”

Naked, terrified, the man nodded rapidly. *Yes, yes, yes*.

“Will Graham was recently abducted from the hospital, Mr. Wilson. It was someone from the inside. I believe you know who it is.”

- - -

Trees were in the window, passing at a fast rate. It was also bumpy, and Will’s head constantly collided with the seat in front of him. He heard the groan before he could even processing making it.

The vehicle wasn’t a hospital-approved van for transferring patients. It wasn’t even a *van*, given the cramped space. With handcuffs shackled around the seat’s headrest in front of him, Will sat uncomfortably in the backseat, his back crouching in an awkward angle. His ankles were also cuffed, both set of limbs attached to a strong length of chain that looped around the driver’s hand. Will found himself most upset with the hard plastic over his mouth.

“Where are we going?” Will looked over at Matthew Brown’s profile as the man drove, both of his hands clutching the steering wheel. His eyes looked bloodshot, tired. He smiled.

“My home.”

“Why...do I taste cotton?”

Matthew glanced over his shoulder. “You’re pretty tied up, but if you weren’t, you’d notice your legs or arms not working so great. I had to give you something back in the hospital to get you out of there. Side effects include…dizziness, headaches, sluggish movements, that whole thing.” He shrugged. “The mask makes things more difficult too.”

Will looked through the window again, the forest growing more and more dense. Shadows were thick between trees, the road ahead of them unpaved and rough. Will tried to even out his breathing, the goal to take slow, easy intakes of air. The clasps of the mask dug into his neck and back of his skull, making the usually tolerable thing press into his cheeks. It covered his nose and mouth completely, condensation fogging the plastic. The mask was only meant for temporary use, no more than an hour at a time, given the small air vents. The holes didn’t allow for much oxygen to filter through, making it difficult for any kind of strenuous activity. That was bad. In the hands of Matthew, Will didn’t know how long he intended for him to wear it.

“Relax, Ripper. We’re soon there.”

The man leaned back to pet Will’s closest leg. He stroked Will through the jumpsuit, a mock attempt at calming him. The self-satisfied smile never left his face, even though there was a blossoming bruise at the corner of his lips. Will tried to remember if he was the one who put it there.

“Where’s your home?” Will tried to righten himself, tried to shake the hand off his leg. The intensity of the man's gaze unnerved him. It was invasive, probing. Will always picked up a strange vibe from the man, a taste of an obsession he had with him, or rather, with the Chesapeake Ripper. Will made the mistake of thinking it would never escalate to something like this. His head had been too busy dealing with another psychopath.

“You *know* I can’t answer that, Will.”

More trees and bumps. They were off road. Will knew, faintly, of a thick and large collection of woods north of Baltimore. It was a mountainous area without trails. But that was only assuming he was knocked out for less than 70, 60 minutes. He couldn’t tell the position of the sun.

“Matthew, do I have to be tied up?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“It’s the only way you’ll talk to me.”

Will couldn’t hide a flash of panic that swept in his eyes. “What do you mean? I’ve talked to you before.”

“No. You’re only talking to me because I’m the force to be reckoned with now. No more ignoring me, Ripper. You’re going to be screaming for me real soon.”

“Once we reach your home?” Will looked out the window at the overgrown area. The sun had a difficult time finding the car as trees arched over the forgotten path. With the amount of thuds the car made with the uneven terrain, Will couldn’t help but fear they weren’t even on a designated route. “Is that where I’ll scream?”

“Yes.” Matthew glanced back at Will, suddenly giddy. “So many people have had you Will, but now I have you all to myself.”

Will doubted that fact. The hospital must have noticed he was missing within an hour of his disappearance. It wouldn’t be long before someone suspected a head nurse who had mysteriously disappeared as well. The car they were in probably belonged to Matthew too, something that would make this treasure hunt even easier. Who would find him, was the real question. Will looked out the window, trying to get some kind of idea where they were going. There was no civilization out there. It seemed to be Matthew’s intention to kill him, probably having dropped the idea of two hawks teaming up the moment he began to show the slightest attitude toward him in the hospital.

Will wanted to groan, roll his eyes, shout at the man that his efforts have been useless. Will knew who’d find them first. Hannibal was always the hunter. It was never the opposite way around, and Mathew was digging his own grave, driving to his death.

Will tried to lift the handcuffs up and over the headrest, but they were secured around the seat. His nose began to itch.

“They’ll find me.”

Matthew shook his head. “Not out here. And don’t worry. Just because you’re tied up doesn’t mean the Chesapeake Ripper will be to. I’ll take up the reign. Live up to the name.”

The house was decrepit, hidden away in the thickness of the woods. It was more remote than Will’s own place in Wolf Trap, surrounded by trees so close they grew along the sides of the walls. Old cars and their parts littered the rundown yard. From the silence of the radio, Will had heard the distant coos and chirps of birds, but in the clearing of Matthew’s house there was no sound outside the car. Even a breeze to rustle leaves had died. Matthew parked the car under the shade of a large tree.

“When my folks died, I got the house. Now it’s ours.”

Will stared with vacant eyes, irises following Matthew as he hopped out of the car. Immediately, Will tried breaking the cuffs against the headrest. He tried to slip out of his sneakers to try and loosen the shackles, but they were wedged on much too tight. Matthew opened his door seconds later, pulling on the leash. He made sure it was secure around his wrist and hand before yanking the man from his position in the car.

“Careful. The drugs are probably still in your system.”

“What-” Will fell the moment he wobbled out of the car, Matthew catching him in his grip. Will flung himself back, hitting the car’s side. “Don’t,” he gasped, “-don’t touch me.”

Matthew glared, moving so he could yank Will in the shackles. “You should conserve your breaths, Will. You only have so much air reaching your lungs now.”

He tugged at him again, leading Will toward the door’s front porch.

“-uck you.”

Matthew smirked when he turned to look at him. Will couldn’t meet his eyes, but he tried now to see what he had missed all those weeks in the hospital. The mask, the shackles, the fixation on the Ripper. Matthew wanted the Ripper to himself, with no interruptions. He wanted to become the notorious killer by means of supremacy.

When the man opened the front door, an odorous landslide pelted Will’s nose. He gagged in the mask, unable to stifle the smell. He grew lightheaded, stumbling as Matthew continued to yank him down the hallway. His eyes adjusted to the dark eventually, scrutinizing piles of old newspapers and layers of dust all along the house. The source of the smell wasn’t difficult to find. There were small animals everywhere, all in different stages of decay. Squirrels, rats, rabbits. The raccoons were the worse, some strung open with organs missing. Will stopped moving at an animal in particular, noticing its missing ear.

He’s copying the methods.

The Tattlecrime articles featuring Graham, printed and nailed to the kitchen’s wall, were trivial compared to the foul scene throughout the rest of the house.

Matthew kicked the screen door open, revealing a backyard even more desolate than the front, if that was possible. The place screamed death. Animals must have learned over the years to never frolic within miles of the area.

When they got to the end of the porch’s stairs, Will tried thrashing in his chains once more, disguising the attempts as drugged stumbles over car tires and overgrown grass.

“I’d watch where you step. I have bear traps all over the place.”

They were headed for the worn garage, no doubt intended to be Will’s new residence. He walked behind Matthew at an angle, eyeing the way he held onto his chains with just one, sweaty hand, while also looking for any animal traps on the ground. The drugs had worn off by now. It’d only be the cuffs slowing him down. Once free from the nurse, he could just rip off the mask himself.

Will pretended to stagger once, feeling the annoyed tug from Matthew. He did it again a few seconds later, and the same languid yank ensued short after. Will watched Matthew’s steps, concentrating on deep, slow breaths despite his heart thumping loudly in his ears.

This time he heaved back with a shout, and sent Matthew far enough for him to land on his ass. Will panted through the mask, spending but just one second to stare at the

accomplishment before tugging the chain's end free of Matthew's hand. He scrambled back, grabbing the shackle so Matthew couldn't reach it easily. Will wouldn't make it up the steps and through the house with the bond around his ankles. Will did what he only could do. With newfound freedom, he reached the clasps behind his head, fingers frantic.

When he had watched Matthew enter his cell, Will didn't cause a panic. He was an employee, abit a strange one, but Will knew his company could have meant a number of things.

When he woke up in a strange car, high on hallucinations, he didn't feel a wave of terror overcome him. Matthew's fascination always stemmed from admiration and curiosity, not hatred or fear.

But now, as Will felt the clasps of the mask covered in a strong *glue*, some of the paste even sticking in his hair, panic consumed him.

And rage.

Will stopped backing away. He looked at Matthew rising from the dirt, his head filled with images he normally only experienced at a crime scene. But this wasn't Will in the mindset of the Minnesota Strike, Tobias Budge, or even Abel Gideon. Contrasting what Matthew probably thought too, Will wasn't honing the Chesapeake Ripper. No, what he felt deep inside was a combination of killers. A feral one, primal, all teeth and nails.

He tackled the nurse back to the ground, punching him in the jaw and hearing a crack so crisp it sounded like a carrot snapping in two. Will managed to get a few more solid hits before Matthew used the restraints against him. He made sure to strike anywhere but at the mask, and Will couldn't help but scowl at the notion. He needed the fucking thing *off*.

They tumbled against hot dirt and dead grass. Will used the chain and pressed a section of it to Matthew's neck, strangling him as he was choked by the plastic over half his face. Matthew pulled Will's tress of hair and he had to arch his back off of him, but the man shouted when he felt Will's hands dig into his cheeks and neck. Will pressed his fingers to his eyes, ignoring the pain against his own scalp, but he didn't get very far.

Besides throwing Will off of him, Matthew began to push his body against his. The already straddling position was made more suggestive, and immediately Will felt the presence of something stiff against his thigh. He buckled, light-headed, and threw himself off the other man.

Matthew took the chance to catch his breath, laughing when he could. He watched as Will stumbled back in the dirt, quickly eyeing the chain and grabbing it before it was out of his reach.

"You…you looked just as you did when I saw you for the really first time." Matthew grinned.

Will stayed on the ground, even as Matthew stood and dusted himself off. He gathered Will probably couldn't stand. Not with what little air he could suck through the mask. Instead Will just settled for glaring, but Matthew saw the mix of confusion there, the fear. Finally.

“Why do you only show Dr. Lecter this side of you? If it’s trust, you can trust me, Will. You know now, you know that I don’t mind it. I don’t judge you.”

His eyes went from the top of Matthew’s bloody forehead to his crotch. His chest heaved, knuckles bloody in his lap.

His eyes were *alive*. Will was alive.

Matthew pulled the chain and the man flopped on his stomach. He dragged Will closer to him, watching as he struggled and grunted against the strain. Dust upturned in the hot air from Will’s defiance, and Matthew took the opportunity when he began to cough by situating himself on the man’s back. It was damp, slick with sweat, but Matthew pressed himself against Will anyway, feeling the man freeze under him. Out of fear or breathlessness, Matthew didn’t know.

“Have you ever *needed* something, craved for something so much it nearly killed you?” Matthew cocked his head, grabbing a fistful of Will’s hair, avoiding the glue, and pulling his head as far back as it could go. The other man gritted his teeth. “I can do whatever I want to you. Right now, I could have my way with you. *For hours*. You know that kind of temptation? Know what it does to someone who wants to wait until everything is perfect?” He reached behind and patted Will on his ass. “You’re beautiful like this, Will. But let me get you squared away first, alright?”

- - -

When he pulled into the suburban neighborhood, Jack thought they caught their man.

Monsters lived everywhere in the world; the streets, shelters, suburban and lavish homes. And in Jack’s experience, the worse normally lived in the most ordinary environment. It meant they could hide amongst others, say hello to their neighbors while working on the yard. It also meant that the man was smart enough to abduct someone from the hospital without anyone suspecting the situation.

When the special agent heard his GPS announce the destination, he *knew* they caught their man.

Alana didn’t call just Jack when she visited the home, it seemed she also called the local police force. The yellow tape caught him off guard, however, as well as the slowly growing crowd of concerned neighbors along the sidelines. He had to park on the opposite side of the street, giving a prompt flash of his badge as he maneuvered over the tape and up to the front porch. Alana was there, waiting for him, her expression telling him everything he needed to know.

“Where?”

“The bedroom.”

He stepped inside, observing the sport memorabilia on the walls, the worn indentation on the living room’s couch. The smell was everywhere, but it lead him down the hallway and

toward the muffled commotion in what he assumed was the master bedroom. It looked like a normal living space for an unmarried man. Jack only noticed the small traces of red on the floorboards because Jim was taking close up photos.

“What am I looking at?”

Brian shined a ultra-violet light onto the bedroom’s curtains, searching for more evidence of blood splatter. “Missing person. Family, friends,” He glanced over his shoulder, “employers don’t know where Wilson is. We know he was here last night. Neighbors reported seeing him exiting his car around four in the afternoon, and the television in the living room was on until ten-thirty. Again, as reported by witnesses. People walking their dogs.”

Jack grimaced, walking closer to Jim eyeing the blood better. “Missing person?”

“We found blood around the outside of the place too,” Jim explained, “Officially, it’s a missing person. Realistically, Todd Wilson is dead.”

The three men were silent for a moment, allowing the spoken verdict to sink in. Eventually, the forensic profiler continued. “Whoever killed him wanted us to know Wilson is dead, but didn’t want to give up the body.”

“Concerned with leaving evidence?” Brian asked.

“If the crime was passionate...” Jim adjusted his latex gloves.

Jack crossed his arms, surveying the scene. Or lack of one.

"Found no prints on the syringe, by the way. Guy wore gloves. He also removed the needle's cap with his hands, sneaky bastard." Jim added. Jack gave an acknowledging, but frustrated nod. Jim watched stoically as Brian continued to scan the walls and floor. "So...elephant in the room. Should we assume Will did this?”

Brian rounded the bed, “Even better question. Are we still treating this as an abduction? Or is it officially an escaped patient?”

“There’s nothing to support anything,” Jack shook his head, nearing the doorway. “We followed a lead, someone known for abusing his authority over Will in the hospital, and now he’s missing. Call me for any updates.”

- - -

Will Graham was beautiful.

Matthew had replicated the scene better than he had ever imagined. The shack was only meant to serve as a replacement of the private room, and yet it seemed to have succeeded his expectations. The shackles were hooked to the bolt in the cement, allowing Will for a full circle of movement, but the man could never get close enough to any of the walls, especially the door. Like a dog in the hospital, Will was his dog on his own property, chained and muzzled, the man’s best option being compliance.

Through a window covered with grime, Matthew watched as Will tried to tear the clumps of glue off the mask. It was a pointless waste of energy, unless he was desperate enough to rip away pieces of his own scalp. Matthew couldn't even see the grimace that was unquestionably set along those lips, the fog against the plastic heavy as he panted. He could have what the therapist had with Will. He could control Will better than the doctor could in fact, may well become the Ripper by that amount of control.

Matthew rounded to the front of the shack, hearing the chains finally cease their noise as he opened the door.

Will stood close to the hook in the floor. His wrists were scraped red from the fight earlier, and any kind of relief probably felt like a blessing.

Back in the hospital, Will would have sat stoically on his mattress, not giving Matthew even the slightest of nods or a glimpse in his direction. Now Will stood facing him, his eyes livid and aimed nowhere but at Matthew's own. His muscles were already tense, and that didn't surprise him. Will was a killer too, using his skills once as a profiler for the FBI. Matthew knew exactly what was on his mind, and Will wasn't indifferent enough to hide it.

"Leaving that mask on with kill you, eventually." As Matthew got closer, Will matched every step of his with one back. "The thirst or hunger will definitely get to you, but lack of air might do it first."

Will huffed. "*Then get this off my face*."

"Not until our time is up." He watched the flicker of confusion flash across Will. He purposely mocked that doctor's line, having overheard the bit of dialog when Will and Dr. Lecter conversed in the atrium cage. Apparently he hit the nail on the head. The therapist must have said the line during every session of theirs. A shiver shot down his spine when Will raised his voice.

"*What?*"

He stopped when he reached the bolt in the ground. "Your choice, Will. You fight me *and* fight for air, or you just give in."

"Give in to what?"

"Me."

"Matthew-"

He leaned down to grip the chain and pulled him closer.

Will stumbled, but fell into the lunge and threw a desperate hit. He was tired. Matthew only had to clamp his hand over the lukewarm mask, and swiftly Will was slack in his arms.

"Weigh your options, Will."

He consented by closing his eyes. Matthew promptly let him drop on the cracked cement. He took a moment to savor the image of Will laying on his back, hair disheveled and cheeks red. He took as many swallows of air as he could, hands fruitlessly clawing at the plastic's edges to find relief.

"Good boy." Matthew crouched down by Will's legs and began to unclasp the jumpsuit's buttons. The other man stopped playing with the mask and instead tried to back away. Matthew proceeded to sit on the man's thighs to stop him from moving. The growing length pressing against Will probably spooked him again.

"S-stop-" He tried to scoot away, and Matthew kept unbuttoning his suit until he reached the last one. The game was already won, as he listened to Will's wheezes. Either Will would lose consciousness, and he'd just wait until he woke back up, or he would learn quickly and relent now.

"Don't-" Matthew pulled Will's white t-shirt up, pressing into new and old bruises along his abdomen. When hands tugged at the waistline of his underwear, another pair held onto them. He looked up at Will, how he struggled for the tiniest intake of air. He smirked, pushing away his hands, and plunged fingers underneath the thin fabric.

Will and his limbs stilled, like a mannequin. The hand touched every inch of skin covered by his boxers, like it was some kind of lewd treasure box he just found. He caressed the traces of hair between Will's hipbones, massaged the walls of his inner thighs. Fingers were harsh around his flaccid length, because he wasn't at all hard, while Matthew's own arousal laid stiff against him.

"Whoever fucks you over becomes the new Ripper," Matthew leaned on top of him, "I'm taking that to heart."

Will teetered on the edge of unconsciousness, spots constantly blurring his vision as his lungs screamed for more air. He couldn't slow his heart rate down because he couldn't calm down. His body tensed at the intrusion under his clothes, muscles flexing to barricade a nosy finger, as sweat pooled between his back and the ground. He couldn't lose awareness with this guy, not after seeing his other captives in the house. Matthew would grow bored with him asleep, and the chance of losing a limb or organ would go up substantially.

His lungs burned. Will cursed himself for the unneeded anxiety. As Matthew rampaged around his private parts, he continued to try and wedge his fingers under the mask's edges. It hurt, the straps circling his head growing tighter as he did this, but maybe if he could just crack the reinforced plastic, make some sort of bigger hole for him to breathe through-

Will heard his shout vibrate off the walls. Matthew had entered him, dry and rough, his entire hand thrusting between his legs as he shoved the finger as deep as it could go.

"Fucking- *s-stop*-!," Will gasped, his feet flailing. He couldn't breathe. Blackness shrouded the periphery of his vision, closing in fast. The finger pressed against internal walls, making his eyes water.

"Say please, Will, say *oh, oh please stop*, and I will."

His chest spasmed, it violent enough to make Matthew's body above him tremble.

"P-please, Matthew, ple-please stop." It was pathetic, a cry.

The painful pressure slipped out of Will right away, even the weight against his body disappeared. He watched as Matthew stood, his erection made obviously clear through his pants, even the small damp area caught his eye. Will stayed on the ground. Although that was all he could physically do, besides wheezing, he also knew it was what Matthew desperately wanted: an angry Ripper who was made to surrender.

Matthew palmed his erection while looking down at him, then gave up the idea with a long and slow sigh, enjoying the feel of air in his lungs as a sort of taunt. "Don't vomit while I'm gone, okay?"

Will let himself fall limp, relief flooding his veins and making his head flat-line. The empty space was welcomed, needed, as he laid panting with his clothes ripped open. His main concern at the moment was air, clean and lots of it, to fill his lungs.

- - -

It was a weakness of his. *The* weakness; a time-consuming and undeniable one. He could pinpoint the day (precisely two weeks and five encounters after first meeting him) he felt the innate stirring of protectiveness and envy deep in his gut.

It never happened when someone complimented Will Graham on his work as a profiler; he was an extraordinarily talented agent and that sort of skill should be admired. When green agents would stop their professor in the hallway and praise him, tell him how they read his work on a specific case, there was never anything in their intent but to utilize Will Graham as some sort of hero, a role model. Their stares were reverent and innocent.

Hannibal could tolerate friendships and those who admired him as a profiler, teacher, lover of animals. He didn't mind that at all. Those were facets of Will's personality that made up the entire captivating whole of him. Innocent and highly regarded qualities.

It was one thing for Will Graham to have admirers of his work (regardless of whether or not he was framed for the work at hand), but Will having admirers because he was *Will Graham* was another thing entirely.

He would see some take advantage of his shy demeanor, attempt to bring Will out of his shell by 'rough housing' with him, wrestling and putting him in a friendly headlock. Old college friends would tousle his hair, mess it up, for a reaction. When approaching Will for a case, he would see lingering female students stirring up conversation with their aloof professor, looking at him like treat on a high shelf. Both young women and men did this, pretending to be friends, initiate physical contact; all for the excuse to feel him, to feel his warmth, to make those fidgety eyes rest on them.

They always fell for his unintentional charms. Will and his blindness, his adamancy that no one ever had romantic intentions. He never looked at their eyes, but Hannibal did. He never

missed the way they looked at Will. The way they took every opportunity to grasp a shoulder, graze his arm, accidentally bump into his backside.

Attention on Will was never a good thing, their intentions purely based off attraction or more malicious reasons. Either way, Hannibal could never stand the way they touched him, felt him. Try to lay a *claim* on him. He felt compelled the touch the very spot that someone had, just so Will wouldn't be tainted by the contact.

With all his patience, he could never stand even the slightest of tricks individuals would try.

And now, as he drove on some forsaken dirt road, he could no longer stand Will's blissful ignorance to their treatment of him. He made the message clear to the offenders, but now it was time to give Will that message as well.

Todd Wilson's body would never be found. There was nothing for Jack's team to gain from seeing the corpse. No grand purpose for the kill either, other than candid punishment. Hannibal had intended for the kill to be a missing person, the news drifting into Will's ear at the hospital accompanied by a shiver of what that *really* meant. No, now the body was just a random variable. The meat would go untouched and unused; as nothing so vile should ever be consumed.

Enough evidence at the Wilson house would provide Jack and the team to make satisfactory connections. Not sufficient to make the correct correlations, but enough to keep them busy.

The man did not die quickly. Nor did he feel no pain. Hannibal made sure it was fitting for a scoundrel, the foulest of pigs.

Arrangements were made immediately after the disposal of the mangled meat. His own house was tidied, certain areas swept under the rug, so to speak. Clients were called under the pretense of an emergency, which wasn't false, but Jack Crawford's definition of an crisis was much different than his own. And, fortunately, the man had yet to even realize his absence.

He was certainly present with the situation, actually much more involved than anyone else. It would have been severely disadvantageous to rely on the FBI this time. Plus, Hannibal didn't think he could hide his slowly simmering worry, explain his deep-rooted concern for Will in front of others. Any sort of brash comment about the profiler, and he would have trouble not acting on homicidal impulses.

If he was with Jack's team anyway, he wouldn't currently be in a particular wooded area, searching for a hidden refuge among the leaves.

His leather duffle bag sat poised in the backseat. He counted on having another body sitting in the passenger seat in the near future. Assuming Brown hadn't killed Will by now, but that was unlikely. Truthfully, he wasn't quite sure what to expect from Matthew Brown when he had first heard the name. But as the travel time progressed, as the woods grew more dense, he could see the hospital nurse for what he truly was. He had enjoyed being Will's nurse, and Hannibal just failed to see how, *exactly*, much.

To pass the time, to make his anger boil and stay feverish, he dwelled on short snippets of memories with Matthew Brown, recalling everything he could of the lanky, obsessed man.

In drying mud ahead, there were tire tracks. They seemed to be turning left, through a narrow archway framed by overgrown bushes. That was a pity. It was easy to see that the place was once a thriving manor. A graveyard of patrician ideals, it would now serve as a graveyard in a more traditional meaning. Hannibal didn't like having his weakness exploited.

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The exertion necessary to pull the hook from the ground wasn't possible with the deathtrap around his face. There was no clock in the dusty shed, but Will knew he had laid on the floor for hours while Matthew was away. He had no idea where the man went or for how long he would be away.

For a long time, Will just focused on his breathing, trying to take deep and slow breaths to alleviate the tightness of his chest. When his heart finally relaxed, when he felt he had energy, Will righted his shirt and buttoned the ratty jumpsuit. He kept his body immobile while he did this, only lifting his bound hands to hitch the buttons.

The possibility of dying through asphyxiation scared him, but he refused to allow the fear of those few holes closing in front of his mouth to make his heart jump.

Eventually, Will scooted by the bolted hook and laid beside it. Excessive force by standing and physically pulling was something Will had tried earlier, and the effort had been wasted. Now he just laid on the ground. Wrapping his handcuff chains around the bolt, he pulled in small intervals. Inhale and heave, exhale and relax.

Will growled, feeling anger rise. It would be so *easy* to pull the hook if he didn't have the damn mask locked around his face.

Giving up on the hook endeavor, he threw his hands to the straps behind his head, pulling at the clumps of hair mixed in with glue and a metal clasp. Nails tried to wedge their way through the dried paste, but Matthew must have used industrial glue to sabotage the clasp. He'd die from thirst within hours. His stomach continuously rumbled. Not only was he weak from dehydration and malnourishment, but Will hadn't slept much other than his drug-induced coma. He wouldn't last much longer on pure anxiety and hate.

From frustration, Will kicked the hook with his hospital brand sneakers, the lightweight material making it easy to feel the rusted metal on his heel. He kicked, scowling, near his wits end as to what to do. When Matthew returned, Will gathered he would continue where he left off the last time.

The sound of metal rattling startled Will, as he felt the hook give way under his foot. It cracked at a slant into the shed's floor before snapping out from the ground. It landed with Will's restraints, flopping causally as though it was just another useless, discarded nail joining the heap.

Will stared, eyes fixed on the hook, his body frozen.

He could place it back in the hole, loosely, and wait for Matthew to get close enough to try and knock him out. Or Will didn't have to wait for his return, and he could run right away.

Option B immediately drew his interest, and Will bolted to a stand so quickly his head spun. He dashed over to a tool counter, remembering an industrial cutter he spotted earlier. Clumsily, trembling, he cut the excess chains that connected his ankle and wrist shackles, which formed the leash, before cutting the link between both hands and feet. Although the cuffs remained on his limbs, at least his opportunity of movement widely increased.

Desperate, he tried to ease the cutter between the strap of his mask and head, but it was too dangerous without a mirror and it pressed uncomfortably close to his skull. He'd have to wait and find proper tools, and more time, somewhere else.

Taking the clippers with him, Will walked across the room and peered through the layers of dirt and filth on the windows. It was strange to walk without the chains between his ankles, it was even stranger to be proactive without company. In the last few months, nurses watching him, cameras recording him, guards eyeing him, and inmates stalking him was something that always just lingered in the corner of his eye. Now, for the first time in a long while, there was no one watching every blink he made.

Will slowly opened the front of the shed, listening for any sounds that told him Matthew was near (god forbid it was any animals), but it was still, like a silence before a bad storm. The sun found him as he crept through the desolate yard, and he had to keep himself from running. It wouldn't just be noisy and rushed, but he also couldn't afford to spend the energy.

The wooden porch groaned under his weight. He tip-toed up the steps, breathing laboriously from the heat around him. The shed had been hot, but tolerable in the light clothes and under the ceiling's shade. But moments under the sun without any sort of breeze made the jumpsuit stick against his skin, wet and itchy.

He held the cutter close, blade in front of him, as he neared the screen door. From open windows, he heard the soft sound of pans and cabinets closing, like a kitchen. But any sort of aroma was already overshadowed by the rotting animals. Instinctively he tried to pinch his nose, only to be met by warm plastic.

Slowly, as adrenaline built, Will inched open the door wide enough for his stature to slip through. Going around the house was an even worse idea, he knew, having to stumble his way through what looked to be a jungle on either end. He'd rather aim for a clear shot through the house than get his foot caught in a bear trap.

When he managed to close the door without attracting attention, Will carefully maneuvered his way down the hallway. It really was a clear line from the back door to the front, as he could plainly see the house's front porch from his vantage point. There was a problem of walking past the kitchen's doorway, however, and Will had to slowly creep around the corner to eye what Matthew was doing.

Cooking. Or trying to. Filthy didn't begin to describe the layers of grime and trash that covered the room. The sink looked to be clogged while piles of garbage laid on nearly every available space and countertop. Something was boiling in a large pot. Even if food meant the

chance of gaining strength back, Will didn't want to know just how Matthew would manage to tear the mask off; let alone make him eat something that may contain animal feces.

Matthew's back was turned as he sorted through the contents of a pantry, mumbling something Will couldn't hear. He treaded by the doorway, and felt a surge of new-found adrenaline when he realized just how close the front door was.

But then a car's door slammed shut.

Will faltered. Relatives. *Family*.

He immediately turned out of the hallway and dodged into the foul-smelling living room. A cat, composed mainly of bones and fur, screeched at Will when he made his entrance, lunging from a pile of newspapers as it hissed.

Will considered his idea to be a bad one.

The hard, blunt force of something hitting the back of his head confirmed it.

He was pushed against the hallway wall before being shoved on the rotting floor. His head bounced against the wood, but he didn't feel the pain, just a warm wetness trickling down his forehead and into his eyes. A body pressed down upon him, forcing him into the floor and the mask rubbing into his skin.

"I caught you, Ripper." Will could hear Matthew's grin through the words, but the joy wasn't from actually trapping him. "Oh, you sure know how to make things interesting. I shouldn't have doubted you."

He grabbed the back of Will's head and tried to smother his face into the floor, but the mask wouldn't let him. It only dug more into the skin. He sat on Will's sore back, crushing his spine. Will shouted, thrashing, using the rush of energy to topple Matthew over and kick him a good distance away from him. Will eyed the dropped clippers in the doorway in the space between them, then scrambled for the tool before Matthew could realize what he was doing.

He hit Will before he could reach it. Will toppled, unable find his footing in the junk lining both walls. Matthew kicked the clippers into the living room, coming to a full stand and just a few feet away from him. "Will, Will…I love you like this."

"F-fuck you." He breathed heavily.

Matthew smiled, eyes lighting up. Just as he opened his to mouth, Will heard the front door open behind him.

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It was impromptu and unplanned, but the security base at Frederick Chilton's hospital became Jack's new headquarters. They had everything they needed on par with the labs, plus complete access to Chilton's files on every employee and every security feed with Will's face on it. They had tapes on his conversations in the atrium cage, every discussion he ever had with a guard or another patient.

One employee caught Katz attention a few hours ago, and she had left the temporary headquarters in haste with a possible lead. She had phone calls to make, papers that needed faxed and emailed, more tick marks under her list entitled “suspicious”.

She was stubborn through phone calls, able to make demands without the need to go ahead and mail her federal badge. All her intel and data scrounged up after a short video feed in Will’s cell. But her hunch proved right. Every guard and nurse seemed to abuse Will in some way, have it be through glares or straight up punches, but her guy seemed a tad less angry, and a bit more obsessed.

She didn’t burst into their headquarters with a grand declaration. Instead she entered observing, glancing at Alana studying the Wilson file while discussing details with the head of security. Jack had a handful of documents spread along the table, but he was currently busy dialing and redialing numbers on his phone. Price and Zeller were still at Todd Wilson’s house, looking for evidence.

“Why isn’t Lecter picking up his damn phone?”

“Matthew Brown.”

Jack looked up from the small screen, turning to the woman in the doorway. “Who?”

“Brown.” Beverly walked headed toward her boss at the middle table. “He’s a head nurse, works directly under Chilton. His vehicle doesn’t match the description of the one on the tape, but records show at a nearby shop one was rented yesterday.”

“He’s also Will’s caretaker. Well, one of them.” Alana added.

Beverly slid her complied folder over to Jack. “That’s not all. He used to be *in* a mental hospital. Matthew *Wayne*. I’m still getting information sent through email, but I know he’s your typical psychopath. He began to show his true colors once his parents died at twenty-five. He was killing animals around their house until, finally, killed his own uncle that took him in. Eastern Shore Hospital took him in shortly after.”

Jack scrutinized the files, the screenshots of the man speaking to Will through his cell bars. He looked like a young guy, just trying to make ends meet by working a nursing job. Not someone you'd look at twice. “What happened?”

“No one knows. He just vanished one day, his cell completely empty. A nurse was quoted for describing it as ‘creepy, like he just dissolved through the walls’”.

Alana pursed her lips. “That’s reassuring.”

“He didn’t dissolve.” Jack countered. “We got him on tape. Do we have a memo out? He’s driving a Discovery rover, red, ‘98.”

Beverly nodded. “Already out. He has three different sets of property listed under his name, but we currently got three teams en route to all of them. He’s our man. He has to be.” Beverly

walked back over to the monitor, though she was in earshot of the pair still lingering by at the table.

Alana watched, unsure, as Jack slipped his phone back into his pocket. He picked up an employee photo of Matthew Green, his frown etched perfectly onto his face. After years of doing it, and so often, the lines just always knew where to fall. Her tone was soft. “What are you thinking, Jack?”

A long moment passed. “He’s alive.”

“And is Matthew the Ripper?”

“No.”

“It’d make sense. Give him a motive for the kidnapping.”

Matthew demonstrates a deep rooted admiration for serial killers. Perhaps he never killed those animals in his youth for sport, but rather he had read about psychopaths committing these acts, and decided to emulate them.

Thanks to Chilton, Beverly had access to any file she would ever want from local hospitals. Even the notes of Matthew Wayne’s primary doctor. They were all printed clearly, even if the handwriting wasn’t. All of the man’s notes seemed to follow the same idea.

“Beverly, get the number of Matthew’s doctor while he was at Eastern Shore. There’s already a motive. Matthew thinks he’s in love.”

Both women shared pained looks, but it was Alana who spoke up. “He has a funny way of showing it.”

Jack could only stare at the photo in front of him. “All psychopaths do.”

- - -

Will understood the phrase *what could possibly go wrong*, the epigram that was *Murphy’s Law* of anything that could go wrong, *will* go wrong. He liked to avoid such phrases, understanding that muttering the expression, or so much as thinking it, was an immediate trigger for something even more profoundly horrible to somehow happen. And in a dire, horrible situation that only got worse as time progressed, it seemed near impossible to imagine even more horrible, dire things taking place.

But Will’s imagination had failed him before.

“Will.” The way Hannibal spoke his name, so casually surprised, was like they had just bumped into each other at the supermarket. He wasn’t supposed to get there yet, wasn’t supposed to arrive while Will was still *trapped*.

Matthew bent his neck to the side, cracking it, and he grabbed an old baseball bat from the litter surrounding them. “Dr. Lecter? Welcome.”

Will didn't have to consider his options twice. Near death between two homicidal men, Will made his choice. He used his arms and dragged his weight toward Hannibal with slight desperation on his features, ignoring Hannibal's inquisitive gaze. He edged behind him and tried to catch his breath.

Hannibal's stature shielded him completely from Matthew, but he could still hear the man taking careful steps forward. Will looked up at the screen door, noting how pathetically high the handle was. It was going to happen now, one way or another. Will just didn't want to witness it.

Both men carried themselves on opposite sides of the spectrum. One possessed an outright taste for gore and chaos, and the man he opposed was something entirely different. Something no medical textbook could define. Matthew certainly had a home field advantage, but the other…

Will cursed his body for shutting down, knowing it was just because a monster decided to protect him from another. His fight or flight response numbed itself, because he couldn't do either anymore. He was done. If the mask wouldn't kill him, then whoever could leave the house standing would.

Will felt that familiar tightness return to his chest. He pressed himself against the screen door for support, terror blossoming at the thought of being unconscious with two killers. Through half-lidded eyes, he saw Hannibal give him another look across his shoulder. His delirium was in full swing now, as Will thought what looked to be concern in Hannibal's eyes. Will didn't realize his own hands were scraping at the mask until they fell from his face.

"Step outside, Will." The door gave a long screech as it opened, and the man had to look up to find Hannibal leaning a bit, opening the screen behind him. He complied, keen on the idea, and immediately scooted himself over the entryway.

"Wait there."

And the door shut, a lock slid onto place. Although Will continued to struggle for breaths, he used his leg to kick the clunk of wood out which pinned the oak door open, watching as it slammed shut on both men. There was a look of perplexity in Matthew's eyes, Hannibal seemed pleased by it.

Wait there.

It took Will three tries to successfully stand, the groans of floorboards in the house a great motivator, and he shuffled down the steps, legs heavy, breathing even heavier. There was a second car, a dark blue Hyundai, close to the front of the house. Hannibal's.

Will knew Hannibal wouldn't have been careless enough to leave a key inside, much less unlock the doors. He kept walking, stumbling, until he couldn't walk any further. Stones, even small pebbles, threw him off balance. He huffed, feeling pathetic, only reaching the end of the clearing. He hadn't even made it to the dirt path.

Panting, he leaned against a nearby tree before sliding down its trunk. His hands pressed deep into the cool soil on either side of him, eyelids threatening to fall and stay closed. There was no breeze to bask in, no water to gratify his thirst. He pressed his fingers deeper into the ground, feeling the sharp edge of a buried rock. Will felt the constant burning of his chest, the lightness to his head, but he placed the stone to the straps anyway. Sluggishly, he tried cutting at the loosest part of the mask in a last desperate attempt, but the heat was his final stroke. Darkness swallowed him.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Hannibal helps Will. It’s just a matter of defining what that really means.

Chapter Notes

This chapter involves porn with a (un)willing voyeur.
AKA: don't judge me too harshly please:)

“You should have stayed on the porch.”

Will gasped, but the notion set of a string of coughs from dust in his mask. He tried to scramble away, his eyes still adjusting to the light. His body was stiff and he found it hurt to move as he woke up. He had no idea how long he had managed to sleep, if such a thing was even possible, but it couldn’t have been long. The sun was still strong, making his skin scorch. Will only saw the pristine shoes and trousers, and it was enough to try to get away.

Hannibal crouched down in front of him, ignoring the protests and firmly held Will's head in place so he could look at his eyes. The man's breaths were short and shallow, and even in his warm grip Will still managed to complicate things with his eyes rolling, shifting randomly. Hannibal pushed him a tad harder against the tree, trying to stop the fidgets, checking his eyes and feeling a contusion forming along the skull.

Hands were on Will, gingerly touching and examining him like a new species of person. Maybe he was, living in a state of life and death. He had no idea how he was still alive. But sudden pain rocked his body enough for him to thrash and try to sit up.

“*S-stop*,” he breathed.

“You will suffocate, Will.”

“Better-” he tried to push the body away from him, dizzy, “than *you*.”

Both hands held the sides of his head decisively, and Will groaned, near tears, as the hands made the mask rub against sore skin. He lashed out, batting the hands away, not caring of the repercussions. He was already dead.

A hand pressed against the mask, making the already tender skin along the edges sting even more. Will shouted, getting the message, and slumped against the trunk of the tree. His chest heaved, hot tears pressing his eyes.

“I need you to stay still.” The voice was soothing as his hands worked. “It is not as bad as you think.”

“I-” It felt like he was dragging through time, like someone filled the mask with water and his body couldn’t adjust. His vision blurred and he licked at his rough lips, feeling something against his head, under the straps. “I…I can’t breathe.”

The sound of a blade was close at his ear, and Will felt something cutting through hair and polyester. He tried to focus on Hannibal’s chin, but his head kept jerking from a sawing motion. His throat was closing, or his lungs were shriveling up, he didn’t know. His body was hot from the sun and he was burning on the inside too, not able to get more than a whisper of air in his mouth.

Fingers picked at and scrutinized the glue on the back of Will’s head. A growl escaped Hannibal, aimed at the cruelty of the device and less at the sheer mechanics. More cutting.

It felt like Hannibal sliced through Will’s very skull. His hands grabbed at the doctor’s chest, flailing for something to tear and hang onto. He registered more hair ripping from their roots, his legs spasming and knees coming up to kick at Hannibal’s back as he worked. It wasn't purposeful, it was reflex, his body was dying. He didn’t have enough air to scream.

A weight fell off Will’s face. Straps released their grip along a sweat-matted scalp and hands left his head. All at once a sudden but profound weightlessness overwhelmed Will, and he swallowed mouthfuls of air like he had been submerged under the ocean.

“Deep and slow. Let the air reach the bottom of your lungs.”

Will fell against the tree, breathing, grinning and nearly laughing from the euphoria of tasting fresh, clean air on his tongue. He closed his eyes, running hands through his freed hair and caught his breath. The burning in his chest went away quickly, but a headache remained and a new, tingling sensation rolled over his face. The edges of the mask; they had caused ligature marks along his cheeks.

“Don’t.” Hannibal caught the shackles around Will’s wrists before he could feel the damage the mask had caused him. He drew his exhausted gaze up, and for the first time, Will could properly look at Hannibal. He wasn’t in typical spotless condition, but he didn’t look as nearly roughed up as Will. He noticed that Hannibal’s eyes were void and dark. Normally, they possessed some sort of mischief or menace in them, but now they were completely blank. It unnerved Will, and he couldn’t help but just stare into the never-ending abyss for a few moments.

Hannibal caught on, and reengaged the other man in the situation. “Can you walk to the car?”

“I don’t-” Will swallowed, pressing his chin to his chest, “don‘t want- -*no*.”

“You don’t have many other options, Will. Should I carry you?”

Hannibal didn’t seem bothered by Will’s distressed objection, as though saving the other man’s life didn’t warrant any kind of appreciation. He knew Will was upset.

Will continued to breathe, deep and plentiful, though his inhales hitched when Hannibal pressed him yet again against the tree’s bark. His face was strangely delicate, a tangle of hidden secrets and emotions, so close to Will’s own. Will could only continue to take in air, his mind deciding to focus on Hannibal’s lips, polished as marble and parting, allowing breath that was cool and intrusive to snake trails over his collarbone. A new kind of heat added to his already hot flesh, watching as Hannibal drank in details of him that Will was not at all familiar with.

For a half a second, Will thought the man would kiss him. Really, he was just checking for more injuries to make sure he could safely carry him.

“I don’t…want to go anywhere. With you.” Will watched wearily as Hannibal came to a stand, eyes scanning him, then glancing briefly over at the car. He shifted, uncomfortably, on the ground, feeling the aches in his body he hadn’t noticed before. There was a prominent damp spot between his legs.

“It’s alright,” Hannibal stepped forward and gently hoisted the man to his feet. “An automatic response to air deprivation. Especially if one has been denied relief for a while.”

Will tripped as he stood, hissing as his shackles rubbed against the grazed skin. Hannibal wasted no time and pulled him onto his back.

“N-*no*, put me down-” Will didn’t want to physically struggle, he couldn’t. Although his chances were better inside a cool, shaded car than the current hell hole he found himself in, his new company didn’t exactly improve. Which, speaking of company.. “What happened to Matthew?”

Hannibal walked to his sedan, and without a key he opened a back door. Slowly, he placed Will along the backseat. Not a single grunt of exertion from the weight, just a deep and heavy stare. “ Comeuppance.”

Will eased himself onto the seats better, grimacing from the pain in his joints and throbbing against his face. The shade from the car’s interior was indeed a splash of cold water, and the feeling of full lungs was better than any meal. Will closed his eyes as his body calmed down from the near-death experience, and he listened as Hannibal shut the door and rounded the vehicle, stepping into the drivers seat.

“My...my face hurts.”

“I know.” He started the engine before turning behind. “We have to leave first, Will.”

He laid against the plush leather, looking back at Hannibal’s eyes in a rare moment of trust. Will looked impossibly pale, bruises on him wherever blood wasn’t, bruises that someone else, not him, had put there. For a moment, Hannibal was completely focused on Will’s face.

His dry lips slightly parted, the perfect line of red where the mask once held, the dried blood along his forehead and matted in his hair. Will looked to be on the verge of death, yet he just rested along the backseat, breathing and looking at him as though they were preparing for a leisurely drive.

- - -

The soft rumble of the car made an incredibly alluring lull when Hannibal reached the narrow path under the trees. Will immediately began to fall in and out of consciousness, especially once Hannibal never made any sort of counsel against it. A headache was prevalent, but he didn't have a concussion.

Will had no idea where they were going, but he knew it wasn't Baltimore, much less the State Hospital. Probably wasn't even Hannibal's residence. Not if any of this mess somehow incriminated him. No, the entire mess implicated him.

Will drifted in and out of sleep, at times his head too foggy to pick up pieces of what he saw each time his eyes managed to stay open for a few seconds. He processed pain and stiff muscles, and the car felt like a cage. The ugly, peach-tan color of the ceiling seemed impossibly close, darkness enveloping under him and to his sides. Bile rose in his throat. He shivered although sweating, and managed to turn to his side, and spat out excess saliva. Will wiped his bottom lip, blinking dirty lashes, and peered over the seat's ledge.

The pile of clothes caught his eye, folded neatly and looking familiar. They *were* familiar, they were his clothes. Khakis, socks, a fresh shirt; right from his closet in Wolf Trap. Hannibal had planned getting him back, alive. Hannibal knew the moment he went missing what to do.

Tentatively, Will reached down to inspect the clothes, feeling such soft fabric he hadn't felt in so long. They even smelled like his home, his dogs. Hannibal apparently remembered his glasses as well, tucking them away between fresh socks and underwear. Will leaned back in the seat, resting his head against a seat cushion. He didn't want to dwell on Hannibal's consideration. Instead he grabbed the flannel shirt, not caring about leaving blood stains, and put the fabric against his nose. He fell asleep in his mind palace, comforted by his dogs and the smell of pine.

- - -

For hours they drove. The air conditioning was at its highest setting, both for Will's comfort, and the comfort of Hannibal's sense of smell. He only chanced one stop along the trip when the man had groaned in his sleep. Hannibal had pulled off the road, into an area shaded by trees, and did what he could to alleviate any pain for a temporary while. Hannibal was resourceful when it came to Will, and was easily able to find whatever he needed to hold the young man over until they were a safe distance away. With the luxury sedan, one he paid for under a false name, Hannibal drove them on unmarked, deserted roads. It added to their trip time, but the quiet outside the car was appreciated.

Hannibal listened to the steady breathing behind him, the slow and deep rhythm of sleep. Matthew Brown had obviously denied Will many things while he was under his supervision,

refusing him even the most basic needs. Matthew would have killed Will with negligence, even if it had been his intention to keep him alive. The thought of it frustrated Hannibal.

So quickly, in less than 24 hours, Will's health deteriorated to something far beyond his condition in Chilton's fortress. Recovery, just from the physical aspect, would take weeks. Psychologically, Hannibal wasn't sure. He'd have to figure out who Matthew *was* when he was with Will. In the short while he was inside the manor, it looked clear that the nurse was utterly obsessed with the Chesapeake Ripper, devoting much time to mimicking the killing style with rodents. There was a very high probability that Will blamed Hannibal for his abduction. Before they had managed to build a shaky wall of trust, but not much else. Now, Hannibal would have to start back with the foundation, perhaps even convince Will all the ingredients are present first.

When they crossed the border into West Virginia, Hannibal pulled into a decrepit motel's parking lot. A road sign nearby only had one location marked, a town which was 45 miles away. The shabby little building was just as rundown as the neighboring gas station and diner, only two cars parked at either establishment while the rest were semi-trailers. It was a place Hannibal would never consider before, not even registering the site as a means of an adequate rest stop. It was now perfect.

Getting the room at the very end of the strip, Hannibal parked the car behind the building before opening the back seat. He gauged how to best carry Will inside. The area resembled an operation room after the operation, blood staining leather seats and smeared along the window where his hands had unknowingly traveled. His ankles had been at risk of infection earlier, from the shackles still locked around them. He took a blanket from the car's trunk and had ripped it, shoving the pieces between the metal and sore flesh during a pit stop.

Carefully, but quickly, he cradled Will into their room, closing the door with his leg and settled Will along the length of the bed. He groaned in his sleep, a scowl passing over his features, and Hannibal couldn't decide if it was from pain or nightmares. He locked the door, closed the drapes, then set to work.

- - -

"Just reached out to another branch." Beverly approached Jack, hopping up the old porch steps. "They're bringing a team out. There's a lot of ground to cover here."

That was an understatement. Dead animals, blood, half-dead animals- just a few minutes ago Jack had found an old couple, long deceased, in the master bedroom upstairs. They made quick, careful rounds throughout the hazardous house, just barely touching the surface of what they were dealing with. They had just began to examine the front yard. The *back* yard was about two acres larger.

"Why didn't we look here first?"

Beverly glanced through the hallway, watching as Alana waded through the old newspapers with a safety mask. The woman originally drove out to the address to question Matthew's parents. Instead, by herself, she had found the aftermath of what looked like a full-out brawl. Blood splatter, overturned trash and junk, disturbed dust, and a hole in the wall.

“The house is still listed in his parent’s names. We had no idea they…passed. No idea he lived here.”

Jack quit smoking years ago, and the idea of ever picking up a box made him physically sick; thinking of Bella back home. Now, though, now he thought *just one* couldn’t hurt.

“He had multiple addresses in his employee file,” she continued, “none of them were real. Or they were outdated. New tenants.”

Looking out from the porch, the front area was mainly dirt, surrounded by dense, shadowy trees. There was just one working car, parked, but two sets of tracks. Someone recently left the property.

His line of thought halted when Jim began to shout from the makeshift driveway. He emerged from the edge of the forest, stumbling out of a thorny bush. He held something in his hand. Beverly’s eyes widened, and she raced down the steps in both joy and apprehension. “No way!”

It was a protection mask from the hospital, its straps cut, condensation from humid breathes still lingering inside the plastic.

“Everywhere we go, it’s just more evidence to pile on.” Alana exited the house. “Bread crumbs.”

“You think these crumbs are purposely laid?” Jack asked.

“I think Will’s fighting back. I think there's something we're not seeing.”

“Well, there’s no body. We have to assume Matthew took Will someplace else.”

- - -

Hannibal approached the bed, eyes moving over Will as he slept. He had taken the worn jumpsuit off him a few hours ago, the rotting material belonging in a garage dump. Now Will wore briefs and worn socks. Everything either had dirt or blood on it. He stood, motionless, staring with a firm jaw. Most of the blood was washed away from Will’s face, but he was still pale. Food and sleep was what he needed. At least, currently, he was getting one of them.

The shackles around each of Will’s limbs were removed, soft bandages taking their place. Most of the injuries were external, save for the possibility of a bruised rib or sore muscles. Will had groaned in his sleep when he gingerly touched along the torso, but that could have been for the fresh bruises.

Somewhere, a hawk’s screech echoed through the forest. A large truck roared by on the road outside. Hannibal didn’t hear what little noise there was; his eyes were focused on what was his, and bit by bit his mind started to simmer down around to its usual pace. Will was breathing fine and sustained no critical injuries. He was going to live. Hannibal nearly dreaded the moment Will would eventually wake, because he may or may not be able to consciously control his actions. Fear was always an interesting concept, a frame of mind,

something he never particularly liked when growing attachments toward someone. But Will was different. He always had been.

Hannibal took the seat already moved close by the bed. He leaned forward and touched Will's cheek, avoiding the bandages that masked around Will's face. His fingers trailed along the jaw until they swept down and rested against Will's pulse. It was steady, strong. The warmth that spread from his stomach was the first physical sensation in hours that hadn't been entirely unpleasant, not counting the surprise of finding Will's bright eyes in Matthew Brown's hallway.

When Will would come to, Hannibal considered starting the next countdown of something like this happening. Somewhere, Hannibal would have to make a repeat performance if this setup didn't change. He looked down at Will, predicting that he might regret surviving this entire ordeal. Once Will realized he would be stuck with Hannibal, stuck in his condition, the man would not be in pleasant spirits. He won't enjoy being on lockdown, unable to get out of Hannibal's line of sight. But Will wouldn't leave him now. Not even if Hannibal had to kill him.

There was a hitch in Will's breathing, faint but noticeable to the doctor. Hands fidgeted, eyes slowly opened, as though fearing a confirmation of a nightmare that hadn't ended. Hazel met brown and Hannibal leaned back in the chair.

"How do you feel?"

Will turned his head, and immediately regretted the action when his facial bandages hit the pillow. Grimacing, he slowly lifted himself up until he could lean against the bed's headboard.

"There are…" he eyed the bandages covering his body, "*many* things I feel…Hannibal. None of which are particularly *good*." A tentative hand came up to touch the area around his nose, and fingers traced the bindings that shadowed the mask's edges.

When Hannibal stood and walked over to retrieve something from a shabby counter, Will watched, curious, as he continued to explore the kinks and aches of his body.

"You have to eat and drink something." A plastic bag settled on the side of the bed, and Will paused to look at the man near him warily. Hannibal sat back down, looking at him as though he never fed Will anything but candy and gumdrops. Peering inside, Will spotted typical snacks like crackers and bananas. Skirting around the food, he grabbed one of the few water bottles and snapped its top off. A hand came to rest on Will's before he could gulp the liquid down a fiery throat.

"Small sips. Drink too much too quickly and you'll vomit."

Will took his hand back, not looking at Hannibal or nodding, but leaned his head back to steal small swallows anyway. For minutes Will slowly filled his stomach, Hannibal watching with a gaze that Will tried to ignore. He ate the crackers bit by bit while drinking as much of the water he could. His eyes didn't just roam over the gauze wrapped around his abdomen, but also the dark room they were apparently lodging in for the time being.

The door was locked, but that seemed to be more for uninvited visitors than it did for anyone trying to make a quick leave from inside the room. Hannibal trusted Will. Or, at least, trusted that his injuries wouldn't allow him to leave. Not that he would. Will was probably considered an escaped inmate. Even if Jack and his coworkers knew the truth, the public wouldn't. An escapee was always more thrilling than a kidnapping. People found it hard to pity someone belonging to a hospital for criminals. Lounds probably had a field day with the news.

When Will finished the bottle of water, he grabbed a second one and unscrewed the cap.

"You said…Matthew got his comeuppance."

"I did."

Will looked up at Hannibal. "What does that…entail?"

The other man tilted his head somewhat, feeling the birth of an anger beginning. It went unnoticed to Will, who seemed more preoccupied with the water running down his throat.

"Tell me what he did to you, Will, and I will let you judge if his fate was worthy of his crime."

Will smiled something breakable. "You dressed my wounds. I think you have a good idea."

"I have pieces of the puzzle." Hannibal watched Will under an arctic gaze, displeasure threatening to rip the steams of his person suit too early, too soon. He realized quickly that it was easy to handle Matthew without Will's presence, easy to pretend Will was nothing more than an obsession for the poor boy. It was another thing entirely, however, to have Will confirm the reality of the situation, confirm that he was manhandled by Matthew, touched by him. Will merely *acknowledging* Matthew's existence struck a nerve Hannibal didn't think existed. The words tasted bitter as he said, "I need you to put them together for me."

Will saw the intensity in Hannibal's eyes when he looked over, responding to it by taking another slow swallow of water. "He..wanted to become the new Ripper. That meant dethroning the original."

Hannibal nodded, the scenes inside Brown's house still clear in his head. "How did he attempt to overthrow you?"

Another sip of the water. "Intimidation, sexual…assault, physical coercion."

"Why do you only show Dr. Lecter this side of you?"

Will frowned and Hannibal didn't press. There was a pulse of silence.

"He wanted the Ripper for himself. I think…" Will took a meaningful glance at Hannibal, "…there was some sort of jealousy at play."

Hannibal ignored the remark, instead he just processed the verification of something he suspected ever since hearing the news that Will was taken.

Will slipped out another plastic bottle from the bag, offering it to Hannibal. When the man declined, Will broke off the cap and lifted it to his chapped lips. Hannibal hadn't eaten anything. Maybe he already ate a nice home cooked meal at the Brown residence. Will popped the bottle off his lips, exhaling.

"Horrible doesn't begin to cover. What I feel." A beat of silence. Will scanned the room. "Where are…the clothes you brought for me?"

Hannibal leaned his head in the direction of the bathroom. "I assumed you would like to wear the fresh garments after a proper cleansing."

The other man looked at the door, touching the gauze on his face.

"There are plenty more bandages, Will."

He nodded with pursed lips, not surprised Hannibal would have more than enough first-aid supplies. It took him a few times to successfully stumble off the bed, and as Will headed toward the shower, he tried not to dwell on why Hannibal would think he'd need more gauze.

- - -

Frederick Chilton tried to crack his neck. There was a knot there, an infuriating kink in a muscle that just didn't go away no matter how much he stretched and turned his head. He watched Howard Vale, some whatever agent from the bureau, interview his entire staff working the afternoon and night that lead up to Will Graham's disappearance. Most were disgruntled, coming in on their days off or checking the clock excessively because the night-shift had ended more than five hours ago.

The dinning hall was larger than any average cafeteria, but every frustrated murmur and muttered curse echoed off the walls and straight into Chilton's ear, making his eyes roll and his patience thin. Hands clasped over his cane's handle, the man looked back over at Agent Vale. He was a sturdy man with a no-funny-business attitude. The wide physique and gritty five-o'clock shadow helped his intimidation factor. The line of potential witnesses who had possibly heard or seen something involving Will Graham had lessened to about forty. Howard Vale could handle it.

Chilton excused himself from the table behind Vale, walking steadily toward security and nodding in faint acknowledgment when they opened the doors for him. Nobody knew Matthew, the head nurse. He always kept to himself. Did his job and left. Chilton always admired the blunt dedication, rewarded the loyalty with not-so-authorized procedure. He wasn't at fault. One can't create a monster with opportunity. He just unknowingly gave Matthew something to fixate his passion on.

He stretched his neck again, sighing, as he made his way into the employee locker area. He swiped his badge, shuffling toward one locker in particular. He got the update an hour ago; the house had been empty, but Matthew had indisputably took Will there against his will. There had been a fight. Both men are still alive and left the property, but in a different car. At least, that was the consensus.

He opened the small cubbyhole, looking at the ransacked belongings. Matthew's locker had been thoroughly searched the moment they suspected him, taking pieces they thought were evidence. But Frederick liked to think he knew what to look for, rather than arbitrarily rummaging. Leaning on the cane, he picked through reading material, old nametags, worn uniformed jackets. He paused at the one jacket in particular, and dug into the hidden pouch inside and within the fabric. He found a small camera card, glanced at it, then pocketed the thing. Finding nothing else, Frederick frowned. He stepped back, looking over at the never-used but oddly not-dusty locker when orderly Catherine Cole died. Hm.

He used his cane in one swift jab, jamming the metal door open. It echoed, but every staff member was either in the café or working the hospital. No one was around to hear.

His hunch was well rewarded. It seemed Will Graham wasn't his first victim, poor Miss Cole. A thin white t-shirt, a legal form that Will had signed, a newspaper clipping of the man as well. There were belongings of Will's that Matthew never got the chance to take home with him, though he obviously had planned to. There were also small scribbles on paper towels from the break room.

…Thursdays are different

The hawk comes, his wing, scythes down another day…

…those sultry dark eyes

Why are Thursday's so different …

dark deep eyes that don't look at me

Have to know to see…

Random, various insights. Frederick could imagine the orderly on his break, writing a fragment or two as they popped into his head. But when the odd one-lined reminders started to use *Dr. Lecter's* name, Frederick immediately shoved the tissue paper into a pants pocket, shut the door, and made a leave for his office.

- -

Another day with a tainted breakfast, and another session where Chilton sat across from Will Graham. He was in his procedural restraints, but they weren't needed with the drug swimming through his system. Frederick watched, unconcerned, as the man looked around his cage with an unfocused gaze. Saliva tended to trickle out a corner of his parted lips, but he was coherent enough to wipe the spit away.

Frederick scanned his notes. "How are you today?"

Will blinked as one his hands traced a cage bar in front of him. The cool metal probably felt good compared to his warm skin. "Hm….off. I feel off. *Not here."*

"Where are you?"

“Fishing. In my stream.”

Frederick looked up. “What are you fishing for? Freedom? Do you still believe you are wrongfully imprisoned, Will?”

The other man’s face contorted like a child tasting a sour candy. “I don’t believe I am. I know.*”*

“Yes.” He drawled. “Because Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper. He killed those people between therapy appointments, put their hair in your fish lures.”

Will’s hands reached up to his head, ruffling unruly curls. “Have you…dinned with Hannibal?”

“ Yes.”

Will was turned down, but Frederick could still see the wide smile. A bark of laughter ricocheted off the auditorium walls.

“Will?”

*“He’s….**obsessed** with me.” He spat the word as though he refused to believe it. Frederick found himself leaning closer to the man, even if he felt a twinge ache in his abdomen.*

“Obsessed? Dr. Lecter?”

Will slowly nodded, looking grave despite the drugs.

“And to what depths will Hannibal dive to…satisfy this obsession?” “

You have to keep him away, Chilton.”

He cocked his head, leaving his notes forgotten on his lap. “What do you feel towards Hannibal, Will?”

“Nothing.”

“You feel something. You called him a monster. That has some negative implications. Is it because you believe him to be a killer? Is he trying to kill you?”

He shook his head, biting his lip. Frederick tentatively reached through the bars, feeling the man’s racing pulse on his upper neck. Will appeared anxious, but the medication kept him from sweating, from crying. He leaned in closer, and whispered, “What did Hannibal do to you, Will? Did he break you?”

“I was already broken.” Will looked through his lashes at Frederick.

- -

As Dr. Childton rounded the corner, he stopped in front of the security base, taking advantage of the open door used for hurried comings and goings. Most of Jack's team was still investigating the Brown home, other agents trying to find clues at Wilson's house as well. Three down, if one counts Miss Cole. He mentally cataloged a reminder for a new help wanted posting.

"And how's the research going, Agent Katz?"

The woman continued to focus her attention on a security feed, one based at the only entrance and exit of the hospital. She was trying to find evidence of Matthew leaving the property. Evidence of anything helpful. Anything they may have missed.

"Going as well as you probably think. Done with interviews already?"

Chilton tucked a piece of paper peeking from his suit pocket. "Something has been brought to my attention. I had to excuse myself."

"Anything helpful?" Beverly glanced over at the man in the doorway, pausing the video. Frederick gave a meaningful stare at the screen. He looked at her coyly, tapping the his staff.

"Have you looked at the entrance gate recently, Agent Katz?"

"No. Why?"

"Isn't there someone Jack has been expecting?" He picked at dust on his waistcoat, pinching it between two fingers. "Odd, for a man keen on etiquette."

"Dr. Lecter?" She placed hands on her hips, shrugging. "I'm sure he's with Jack by now."

"Or maybe with someone else."

She scoffed. "What are you getting at, Chilton?"

"Matthew Brown fooled us-"

"*You*."

"…fooled me," He deadpanned. "But perhaps there is still a wolf amongst the sheep."

The moment Agent Katz reached for her phone, Frederick left. He reached his office, shutting the door behind him with a tap of his cane, and sat along the sofa by the tall bookshelves. As his laptop hummed to life, Chilton took out various notes, the name Hannibal Lecter swirling around in his head.

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"There is a problem I must address with you, Hannibal." Dr. Chilton turned around as he walked behind his desk, watching as his guest shut the office door behind him. He grabbed a hidden bottle of alcohol from a drawer. "It pertains to Will Graham."

Dr. Lecter clasped his hands together at his waist, a neatly folded jacket draped over an arm. He looked over at Frederick, not entirely surprised at the news, but curious nonetheless. "You were indistinct over the phone. I had assumed it was urgent if you decided this couldn't wait until my appointment with Will this Thursday."

Chilton glanced up at Lecter, popping the bottle open. "Care for a glass?"

"No, thank you." Hannibal watched as the man poured two glasses anyway.

He walked over to him and handed him one of the glasses, as though Hannibal had eagerly accepted the offer. He took it at any rate, staring at Frederick and waited for him to continue. The dark-haired man took a large swallow.

"I need you to back as his primary doctor."

Now *Hannibal was surprised. Will's head was a so-called "goldmine" according to Frederick. They had indirectly fought for Will's rights ever since the man had been moved to the hospital. Giving Will to him would come at some sort of price.*

"May I ask what prompted this request?"

"I always adore a challenge." Frederick rounded back behind his desk, setting down his already empty glass and pouring another. "Patients who put up a difficult fight tend to have interesting things to hide. But Will Graham's severe difficulty isn't the reason I want to transfer him. It's his health." He sipped his drink. "He stopped eating his meals. I also believe he may be intentionally hurting himself."

Hannibal closed the distance until he stood on the opposite side of the desk. He placed the drink back down as a quiet insult. "You believe I can help him."

"I know you can, Hannibal. You've been his doctor for a year. Even I *can admit you know his ticks better than anyone. Just as I know you really wouldn't mind being his primary again."*

"Will's failing health could call attention to authorities." Hannibal said. "You want him to stay at your hospital, even if that means giving him over to me." A pause. "I will oversee Will, help him recuperate."

Frederick didn't realize he had felt anxious throughout the entire conversation until Hannibal made a leave for the exit. But then it reared up when the other man stopped in the doorway. Hannibal looked back, the smallest of smiles gracing his lips.

"You are consistently a problem for me, Frederick."

The words lingered in the air like a threat. Chilton swallowed another mouthful of wine. Maybe Will wasn't too off about the man.

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He reached into his pocket, tracing the small black camera card with his thumb. It was one from the security room, used to transfer footage the old fashioned way. There wasn't an

inventory on them, but Chilton would have to remember to start one after this.

He inserted it to his laptop's side, clicking the 'play' button when the window popped up. He wanted to be surprised at the footage of Matthew taking advantage of a very groggy and drugged Will, but really, once hearing the news of the man being a loony, Frederick wasn't that astonished. It seemed Matthew had a collection of videos of him touching Will in his cell. Small clips of Will sleeping in night-vision filters.

"He's….obsessed with me."

Oh, what a day of discovery. Frederick felt an excited chill swept over him, making his lips stretch and the ache in his neck completely forgotten. The thought of having all three in his hospital was invigorating. Dr. Frederick Chilton having such a colorful trio of men at his fingertip. Maybe he'd put Matthew, Will, and Hannibal in adjoining cells. Dangle Will between both men and make them all squirm. It was just the matter of getting them there.

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The bathroom was small, and Will suspected a one minute shower could quickly cloud the room like his much longer session had. He opened the narrow window pane when he stepped out from the curtain, inhaling the fresh, cool air that had swept through a shaded forest and into the restoom. He wiped away some fog from the mirror, expecting an ache to shoot down his side though it never came.

Although the shower had been a tedious process of acquainting tender skin to warm but pelting water, Will was surprised at his own strength. Besides the mild sunburn along his forehead, a few sensitive bruises, and the broken skin along his face and wrists, there seemed to be no serious harm. He felt tired, surely; a bumpy car ride and stiff motel mattress didn't grant the best sleep, but Will had always been familiar with the trouble of tiredness.

He picked up a plastic toothbrush Hannibal had sneaked in his pile of clothes, and he looked at himself in the mirror as the fog began to let up. He leaned in close to examine the area where the mask once laid. The inflamed skin was a near-perfect line, like a red marker was drawn along his cheeks and over his nose. He traced the path, following back along his scalp. Strands of hair was missing from where the glue once held everything together.

Will sighed, spitting into the sink and dabbing his mouth. He grabbed fresh clothes on the counter. His skin was free of the layers of grime and sweat that suffocated it for nearly 24 hours, and he found it difficult to stop the random, but indulging, long takes of air he inhaled through his mouth. He wasn't quite sure what Hannibal intended for them to do now, both of them probably being sought after by the FBI. Will would go along with the other man's plan as long as he could before an opportunity would arise. Payphones still existed along the country, and by the sparse but constant hum of vehicles along a road outside, Will's chances of alerting Jack grew even greater.

Dressed and wrists decorated with fresh bandaids, Will purposely moved at a slow pace towards the bathroom door. If he could feign discomfort, it may come in handy down the line to catch Hannibal off guard; if such a thing was possible. He grabbed the handle and rounded the corner, tussling damp locks of hair.

“I told you what happened with Matthew, so you tell me-”

Catching Will off guard, however, was extremely possible and always likely.

Hannibal waited patiently for Will’s return on the bed’s edge, sitting stoically with his hands clasped in his lap. He looked over at Will, his clothes still pressed and polished, though Will had no idea how given the circumstance. Matthew Brown was tied to the chair Will last saw Hannibal in, his wrists wrapped with rope so tightly the tips of his fingers were white. His torso was also secured against the chair’s back, his ankles and mouth restrained. Though the man looked positively beat, his nose bleeding and some hair missing, he was breathing calmly. His eyes turned to face Will, not pleading or terrified, but understanding. He gave a faint nod. *Hello, Will.*

Will’s gaze darted back to Hannibal, a hard stone settling in his stomach.

“As you can see, the end of our bargain has been met.”

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When Hannibal stepped through the doorway, his eyes adjusted so quickly to the sudden darkness that he questioned what he really saw.

Will was sprawled along a repulsive hallway in an even more repulsive-smelling house. And he was in horrible shape; fresh blood trailing down his forehead and passed the mask he still seemed to be wearing from the hospital. That wasn’t ideal, especially as Will laid on the ground, panting, face red, as he stared up at Hannibal with something like horror in his eyes.

Bearing the surprise of both Will and the ghastly smell of death, Hannibal blinked. “Will.”

He knew he would find his Will there, just not particularly half-dead by his feet. “

Dr. Lecter?”

Hannibal dragged his gaze away from Will’s wide, disbelieving eyes, looking up to find the orderly from the hospital just a few feet away from Will. He watched as Matthew grabbed a baseball bat from a heap of dust and paper. “Welcome,” he smiled.

Panic fought through the surprise and denial, and Will scrambled his way closer to Hannibal in desperation. Hannibal looked back down at the dependency, a surge of protectiveness immediately swelling inside. Will had chosen him. Even before a hit landed, a word exchanged, Hannibal already won.

He took a step to the side, letting Will scoot behind him easier, before shielding the suffocating man entirely from Matthew. He looked up, watching undeterred as the other man slowly closed in. He could feel Will’s heated wheezes against his pants’ leg, and put up a hand to signal a pause in the developing game.

Fortunately, Matthew stopped his progression, but the grip on the bat tightened. Hannibal took the short moment to look over his shoulder at his once lost, now mistreated belonging.

The man was unknowingly clawing against the mask, desperate in his terror, but Hannibal wouldn't be able to calm Will down now. He leaned back, opening the screen door.

"Step outside, Will."

The man immediately scooted away with a burst of energy even Hannibal was surprised the man still possessed at this point.

"Wait there."

In the shade, Will would stand a better chance at catching his breath. Hannibal would have to make the altercation quick in order to attend to the man's condition. He shut the screen door when Will landed on the porch, locking it for Will's sake; he didn't want to make things too easy for the orderly.

And apparently neither did Will. Both men watched as the storm door was kicked shut, slamming over the screen; the crash no doubt Will's substitute for a frustrated curse.

Hannibal turned back to Matthew, the only light now emitting through doorways in the hallway.

"How long have you been Will's doctor?" Matthew held the bat at his side, loose but primed. He kicked some of the fallen newspapers, sliding them to the side with his foot.

"One year." Hannibal looked at the man directly in the eye. Like Todd Wilson, no kind of meat should be served with blood oranges, mustard seed farfalle with sage, and peppers in minted pea pods. Something so foul didn't belong on a dinner plate, but Matthew was a different sort of foul. He didn't belong under a scalpel just yet either.

Matthew took a step closer, excitement radiating off him. "You were the one that caught him, put him in the hospital."

"So to speak." Hannibal's lips cracked into a devastating smile, one that screamed danger, possession, wickedness.

Matthew's eyebrows climbed, his mouth slacking. In the hallway, Dr. Hannibal Lecter looked as he did in the hospital's private room, eyes dark and stance wide. His hands trembled. He wet his lips. "I had him just like you did. Under me and obedient. Only took three months."

He swung the bat, but Hannibal dodged down and aimed a blow in the man's stomach. Matthew stumbled back, grunting, but refused to go down easy in his own home. Not with Will so close, not with everything so near-perfect just seconds ago. He lunged again, swinging the solid wood until it plunged into the wall behind Hannibal. He watched as the doctor dislodged it, throwing it into the living room's archway. Matthew slammed Hannibal against the wall, hissing, but Hannibal head-butted him back, hard.

"Do you normally beat patients so badly they cannot walk?" He watched as the young man staggered back to the wall opposite, clutching his head.

"Will was stubborn," he breathed, "He tried to escape me."

“Good.” Hannibal took the opportunity. He crashed Matthew’s head against the foundation to knock him out for good. The orderly’s limp body slid down the wall in a thud that was softened by a heap of paper. Hannibal didn’t have to catch his breath, though every inhale was particularly painful from the sharp stench in the air. Hannibal hoisted the body back up, wrapping a lifeless arm around his own shoulders. He dragged Matthew down the short stretch of hallway, unlocking the door.

He brought the haul to a standstill, however, frowning when he noticed Will wasn’t on the porch. There were drops of blood along the steps, and Hannibal followed them, looking across the dusty yard. He squinted his eyes in the sun, staring at the comatose Will, his hands fallen at his sides while the rest of his body was stretched out languidly on the dirt.

He slugged Matthew over his shoulder at a better angle, walking down the stairs and immediately to his car. There was wire in the trunk that Hannibal used to tie Matthew’s limbs with. An adequate gag to ensure a quiet car ride. He patted down the man to check for anything sharp, then shut the car’s rear.

Will was unconscious, passed out it seemed, as his body leaned against a tree near the overgrown pathway. No doubt the heat had got him.

Hannibal immediately marched over, concern and a hint of aggravation gracing his features when he could see condensation still evident on the inside of the mask, and blood. Will was alive, though Hannibal wished Matthew could have managed more than just keeping him above a steady pulse. The blackout was an interesting development, however, something he could certainly use to his advantage with Mr. Brown.

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It was hard to breath through the spit-soaked gag, even harder to squirm from nerves in the encasing and itchy rope, but Matthew could thank Dr. Lecter for the opportunity to see *Will*iam, Will*iam* when he could have died instead.

The man exiting the attached room played in his mind like a slow-motion reel, the man looking how he did when Matthew first saw him all those months ago at the front of the hospital. Besides dazed eyes filled with distraction though, Will was completely present. Wearing that plaid shirt that hid those shivers, that cold sweat not well enough, Matthew watched Will’s throat as his Adam's apple bobbed.

“I fail to see how this is…punishment.”

Dr. Lecter cleaned Will up so well. He even smelled like himself; anxiety and damp leaves on a forests’ ground, musky but enticing. The hickies blossomed beautifully on Will’s pale skin, as screamingly noticeable as a neon beckon. Given his restraints and horrible headache, Matthew guessed Dr. Lecter wasn’t too pleased with his handiwork.

Hannibal looked at Will, then over to Matthew in front of him. “We needed you well, and awake, Will.”

It didn't look like Will was happy with the arrangement. Matthew wasn't happy much either, even if he was within reach to feel the man's hair between his numb fingers. The room was filled with an unhappy crowd, all wanting something drastically different from the other. If Matthew's mouth wasn't gagged, he'd try to convince the ringmaster, who was apparently the real Chesapeake Ripper, to let him have a go.

Hannibal slowly ascended to a stand, sensing Will's increasing skittishness. "Come here, Will."

Matthew saw the hunger in Hannibal's eyes. It was something he never saw in Will, and he understood who the true Ripper was. And just what *would* the Chesapeake Ripper do a man like Will? What would he do to his stolen obsession? A chill ran down Matthew's spine, though he couldn't pinpoint if it was envy or excitement.

Will glanced behind him, eyeing the bathroom window that was much too small and narrow for a person to slide though. Hannibal wasn't wearing shoes, and he also lacked his jacket and waistcoat. His sleeves were elegantly rolled to his elbows, but that wasn't a man who was hard at work tying someone to a chair. There was something sinister in the air, screaming at Will to take his chances and barricade himself in the bathroom.

"Will," Hannibal's voice changed a shade darker. "Come here."

Matthew's transgression involved Will. The blood, and the heat with it, drained from Will's face at the implication. He stepped forward, stopping when he realized just who he was dealing with, but the sneer didn't leave his face. "Is this some kind of power play? Show the dog who its master is?"

Every session back in the hospital stuck clear in Will's head. Matthew had attempted to upset that hierarchy, apparently. Will tried to wrap his head around what Hannibal expected of him in this… comeuppance.

"Do you believe me when I say I have your best interest at heart, Will?"

He stared straight ahead, not allowing himself to look at Hannibal. His arms stayed tense by his sides, hands balled in tight fists at the implication of all this. Hannibal had only patched up the dam so another flood could break way. He was aware of Hannibal's pressing gaze, but kept his own eyes even. Unyielding. His reserve nearly broke though when he caught Matthew giving the faintest of smiles through the gag. Hannibal isn't going to hold back anymore. They weren't in a hospital. They weren't even in the man's office, pretending that the barriers of patient and doctor were sacred. No restraints.

Will experienced Matthew without professional boundaries and it almost killed him. He didn't want to know what it would be like with Hannibal.

Hannibal stepped in front of Will, close, and Will couldn't breathe anything but his smell, the anticipation and keenness drowned him.

"*Will*."

A cautious hand came up, and suddenly it felt as though that mask was back on his face, cutting off oxygen. Will found the strength to shove Hannibal away, staring at the aftermath of a complacent, though perhaps mildly amused Hannibal approaching him again. *I'm giving him what he wants.*

If the goal was to make Matthew regret kidnapping him, then Hannibal would have Will every way Matthew intended for himself. But if he didn't try to fight this, didn't try to escape, what was his other option? Just taking it? Then Hannibal would still get what *he* wanted, all the while having Matthew watch.

"You've never had my *best interest* as a priority, Hannibal." Will stepped back. "If you did, you would let me leave. Right now."

"That wouldn't be ideal." His voice was dark as he closed the distance between them. "Your face is on every news station. On these back roads, it is dangerous for you."

"*It's dangerous here*." Will took a swing at Hannibal, using as much momentum as he could to land a solid hit and hear for a crack as he made contact. But the man's reflexes were faster than Will's, and he blocked the punch easily. He seized Will's surprise to his own advantage and brutally grabbed the smaller man's shoulders, turning him around, and he wrapped his arms around Will. Arms pinned to his sides, Will fought back, cursing as Hannibal turned them both so Matthew had the best view possible. He couldn't break the iron grip his once-colleague had on him and Will bared his teeth, struggling as hard as he could. The bruises scattered along his abdomen hurt at the strain and anytime Hannibal (purposely or not) brushed against his reddened wrists, Will shouted.

"Matthew needs to know his attempts at a courtship were wasted from the beginning." Hannibal paused as he tightened his grip around Will, who continued to fruitlessly fight against the hold. "He needs to know he made a mistake."

Will panted, leaning away as far as he could, not wanting to feel breath tickling his ear. His cheeks probably matched the sunburn on his forehead.

Hannibal pressed himself against Will even more, easing a hand around and slipping it down between Will's legs. His legs immediately bucked, both embarrassed from Matthew's open stare and enraged Hannibal could just touch him this way. He tried to fight away, tried to sink to his knees if it meant that violating hand would stop, but Hannibal kept him standing. His hand caressed Will through his jeans, making him tremble from the rough strokes to the suddenly gentle massages. Matthew knew Will would have gone on with his stubbornness much longer in his care, but Hannibal's presence was something else entirely.

Hannibal didn't want to start with such a sensitive organ, but he knew it was the only way to get Will to go slack quickly in his arms. He continued his focused attention down below, not able to see the sight himself, but able to feel the beginnings of an erection. He only had to fixate his gaze on Matthew for the visual pleasure, watching as the orderly grew conflicted between envy and attraction. Hannibal listened to Will's heavy breathing as his practiced hands stroked through the coarse fabric. He pressed even harder into Will's backside, smelling the curled bush of hair and pushed his own erection against Will's backside.

Will shook his head, his back bent forward, eyes squeezed shut. Unwillingly, he moaned in the back of his throat, lips coming together to strangle the sound and tolerate the pulse of pleasure that bolted through him.

“Only I know what you need, Will.” Hannibal’s voice was low, near seductive. “When was the last time someone had given you this much attention and made you feel this good?”

Will kept his eyes shut, trying not to enjoy the doctor’s touch. His cock was fully awake now, stiff and uncomfortable against his jeans. He stopped struggling, only focusing on his breathing and trying to deal with Matthew’s probing gaze.

Experimenting, Hannibal arched his hips into Will before pushing back. Then, he did it again, in a steady but sensual rhythm against Will’s ass. As his hips moved, his upper half gently swayed, holding Will as his hand worked him just enough to get the blood flowing.

The contrast was blinding. Matthew’s fingers itched from the need to touch such a conflicted Will, at war within his own mind. The men couldn’t have been more different, even their appearance showed the yin and yang; one immaculacy dressed and in control as the other looked to go on a fishing trip, putty in the other man’s hand.

“Han-Hannibal, stop.” His heart raced, and damn him, damn himself if he finished in his own pants. A free hand swooped to grab Will’s soggy strands of hair, pulling the man back fully against him and massaged the scalp as he did so. He knew Will’s tender spots, knew just where to make him whine and mewl like a begging dog. He also knew Matthew lacked this knowledge. Hannibal buried his hands in Will’s freshly cleansed hair. He pressed his lips to the hollow of Will’s neck.

Will did not resist him, but he wanted to. Matthew was in awe at the spectacle. It was just like their private sessions, only the intimacy went up a few notches. Matthew realized what the real Ripper already knew; Will was Hannibal’s.

Suddenly he pulled Will’s head back even more, forcing his neck to lay against Hannibal’s shoulder, while his used his other hand to stroke the prominent erection. Will bit his tongue, in pain, but never cried out. He didn’t want another pathetic whimper to escape his chapped lips. The hand caressing Will traveled further up on the last stroke, landing on the belt of his jeans and flicking the loop loose. The fingers unclasped the belt, unbuttoning his pants. Hannibal looked directly at Matthew as he did this, not allowing the orderly to break his gaze. Will was a mess against him, shivering and panting, neck displayed along his shoulder. Not breaking the stare, Hannibal dived inside Will’s jeans in one flowing motion. Will’s feet clamored on the floor, struggling with the invader roaming freely along the most sensitive part of his body.

Then all movements stopped. Will gasped, eyes wide, and instinctively pushed his hips forward.

“Did he do this for you, Matthew?”

Again, with a flick of his wrists, Will’s mouth flew open and he grinded forward, pressing his length against Hannibal’s fingers, seeking out that delicious friction. He whimpered from the

sensation, his head leaning far back on Hannibal's shoulder as his hips swayed. Matthew grunted in his gag, trying to move the chair closer to the pair but without any luck. He watched, burning the details in his head, as the arm contracted and the hidden hand did something inside Will's jeans. The man against Hannibal turned into a bigger mess, eyes rolling and trapped arms spasming as a finger entered him.

He felt a hot tongue against his neck as he trembled in Hannibal's grip, the muscle trailing up and up until it found his pulse point, and sucked. Will jerked in Hannibal's hold, a breath coming out like a hiss.

"Will," Hannibal slackened his purchase in Will's hair somewhat, letting the man tilt his head forward. "Look at Matthew."

Just as Will grudgingly did, he felt his jeans puddle around his ankles. A thumb flicked over the head of his cock. Jerking his hips forward, Will cursed under his breath and immediately looked anywhere but at Matthew's prying gaze. A smooth hand loosely gripped Will's hardening shaft, moving up and down in languid strokes.

"Longer next time, Will." Hannibal continued to scrape his teeth along the man's neck. Will tried, halfheartedly, to edge away. The sharp teeth were an ominous reminder of who Hannibal Lecter was, and Will knew the bites were purposeful, a warning, a taunt. Every time Will made a short moan or quiet sob, Hannibal rewarded him by wrapping his fingers tighter around Will's length as his pace picked up slightly. Will began to trickle out from the tip, and Hannibal used it along the shaft to make him slicker. The hips continued to mechanically move with the hand. His willpower melted under Hannibal's steady touch.

Ruefully, Will recalled all the sessions in the hospital. All the sessions in the doctor's own office. It was all practice, leading to the main event. Something dormant awoke and Will shook his head against Hannibal, denying the growing pleasure as the other man let go of his hair. The hand roamed down his neck, over a shoulder and along the edge of his shirt. Will staggered again, shouting something that was a mix of a grunt and moan as Hannibal sneaked up his shirt.

"Tell me I have your compliance, Will." Hannibal pressed against Will's heap of hair, purposely loud enough for Matthew to hear every word. "Tell me."

Will cried out, his hips with a mind of their own. He thrusted shamelessly into Hannibal's hand. He bared his teeth when his balls were stroked. "I-I…yes, okay," he groaned and Hannibal sucked at his neck. "Yes."

Hannibal stared at Matthew as Will gave his admission, gaze hot and steady. Hannibal didn't need Will to be in chains for him to obey. Hand stilling around Will's length, he used his other hand to crane his head toward his. He kissed the mess of a man hard, asserting himself over Will.

Like Matthew, Hannibal seemed obsessed with possessing Will entirely. Though he didn't kiss back, Will didn't lean away either. He was malleable, moldable. Hannibal admired the beauty of a fresh slab of modeling clay as just as much as a finished one. He slowly let go of his grip on Will, helping the man step fully out of his jeans, shoes, and socks.

Will looked like a clumsy virgin. Matthew blotted Hannibal out in his imagination, watching as Will stumbled out of his boxers, terrified and aroused. He was doing this for Matthew, cheeks red in both embarrassment and past injury. Interestingly, Will seemed most humiliated when foreign hands itched off his shirt. It was his last line of defense verses the open air, against Matthew's eyes and Hannibal's touch. The taller man tugged the fabric off Will's shoulders. Matthew moved his gaze everywhere, assessing and memorizing. Stripped bare, Will stood with an erection in front of both men. Hannibal became his anchor once more, directing him toward the end of the bed and helping him settle on top of it.

Matthew, fascinated, looked at Will's bare skin somehow glistening in the dark, his body trembling as he found himself shockingly close to Hannibal. Matthew's bulge grew greater as Will unknowingly licked his fill, dark lips. If Matthew hadn't been fully hard before, he certainly was now. Will's nude body was the most divine thing he had ever seen. Hannibal followed Will, placing one knee against the mattress and then the other, careful, watchful as Will crawled across the bed. He shuddered as warm hands explored his back, obsessing over the angels of lean muscle and dark contusions. Will bent in on himself, pressing his head against the sheets, smothering his eyes.

"Shhh," Hannibal hushed, and Will didn't even realize he was making sharp whines under his breath. He hardly felt the first slick finger enter him, but he wanted to cry the moment his body instinctively rocked back on it. Hannibal kneeled behind Will, an arm wrapped around his waist as his other hand bared down on him. He added another finger, stretching him open more, the other hand keeping his length hard with occasional, teasing, strokes. Will moaned, thrusting back. Hannibal added a third finger, crooking them, immediately finding Will's prostate. His neck arched back up, and Matthew could see the man's eyes nearly rolling to the back of his head.

"You smelled of Will when I entered your home, Matthew." Hannibal moved closer against Will, his eyes sliding over to the tied man. "You smell envious now."

Will looked beautiful in the dim lighting. His almost green eyes burned, his mouth open and gasping sharply. Soft noises escaped him unwillingly, playing in Hannibal's hand. Matthew was only partially aware he growled. Hannibal nodded at Matthew, accepting the response, and shifted on his knees as he pushed his own pants and briefs down. It was only then did Matthew see the outline of a hard on in those expensive slacks, then the actual thing unhidden by any kind of fabric or briefs.

The new pressure against Will's walls became his entire world. The situation should have been repulsive, vulgar, made his mind shatter into a billion pieces that couldn't be brought back together. His body shouldn't have been shuddering in an entirely responsive way. Did he fall so deep in the rabbit's hole that any sort of intimate contact made him like this? He shouldn't have arched into the hold Hannibal placed on him, leaning into it subtly though he knew Hannibal noticed. He knew and Will knew those uncontainable thoughts manifested physically within him. The lust was there, invading his mind like a surge of water until he was drowning.

Will's muscles quivered with the strain of the length inside him. He whimpered almost continuously, not caring. His head spun, a mess on the inside just as was outside. He was

beyond words.

The sight of Will getting fucked onto the bed made an animal take over Matthew's mind. The sounds Will made, so desperate, made him want to take Will himself. Take him in the mouth, feel the vibrations of the cries on his cock. Matthew didn't like the sight, even though he daydreamed of those emotions racking across Will's face for months. Hannibal penetrated Will in a more intimate way that Matthew had ever done. More than what Will would ever allow. The animal rampaged through Matthew's head, sending heat down his spine but also an anger. He was supposed to be the new Ripper and have Will at his side. But it was Dr. Lecter and *his* hands that moved over Will like he owned him. Matthew thought to look away, out of defiance, but that would mean he would lose, it would mean he was weak, so he stared Dr. Lecter down, watching every change of Will's face and tries so desperately not to react. Each thrust sent Will skidding across the bed a little more. He could see Will's white fingers finding purchase in the bed sheets, twisting in both pleasure and anguish.

"Look at him, Will." Lecter breathed, it ghosting over Will's neck and making him shiver. He nipped at the exposed skin, savoring the faint taste of sweat and fear. Hannibal could live a thousand lives and never tire of that heady scent, that delicious taste.

Will turned to face Matthew, embarrassed, aroused. He tried to hold the gaze longer, but it was so difficult. He nearly sobbed when Hannibal pulled out.

He turned Will over on his back with a soft, "Good boy." He bent the man's legs back until his knees were aimed the ceiling, then spread them. Matthew had to marvel at his flexibility. The fucking became more rapid. Will's hands curled back on the bed, his breathing fast, his chest rising and falling. Matthew could tell the moment of Hannibal's climax; not by his face, but by the noise Will made as the liquid spilled into his little entrance.

Will was a virgin, wasn't he? The wash of anger that hit Matthew was terrifying, but that was supposed to be *him*, *he* wanted to be the first one to know what it felt like to be with Will.

Will moaned as though he was filled to the brim, and Matthew could almost see the wetness that would be overflowing. Hannibal looked satisfied, but not because of his release. He watched as Will pushed himself back on Hannibal's member, squirming. He was desperate for a release of his own. Hannibal pulled Will back, making the man lean against him. With Hannibal's own legs sprawled out, Will eased into the man's embrace as he tried to even his breathing and the red on his face. Will sat between Hannibal's legs, and Matthew watched as Hannibal pushed Will's head back onto his shoulder. He angled them both so Matthew had the complete view of where their bodies connected.

Hannibal stroked Will's hardened length. "Tell me, Will."

One stroke, and it made Will pant and sweat through an agonized, humiliated expression. "Hah..."

"Will." Another stroke and Will began to shake, reluctantly spreading his legs.

"Please-please, Hannibal. Christ." A third stroke, and Will pushed himself into Hannibal's hand.

“F-fuck, please-” Four strokes, and then he came.

Matthew could smell the hot scent from his position, and Will’s eyes rolled back and flickered shut as he fell limp against Hannibal’s lap. Already weak from the ordeal he went through recently, Will found his limit. The orgasm had been too much.

Hannibal, slightly surprised, managed to hold onto the man, whispering in his ear. “Will, come back. Wake up.” He spoke softly. The man beneath him moaned. “Shh, breathe.” Will opened his eyes, which were bloodshot, and his chest began to gently shudder in tremors. A tear, and another, rolled down his cheek, irritating areas of the enflamed skin. Hannibal sighed into him, wiping his hand on the dingy bed sheets.

Will rested his cheek against Hannibal’s shoulder, away from the orderly. The fact that Hannibal made Will like made Matthew’ nose flare. He knew it was the purpose of all this, he knew he made a mistake. He got that now. *Look but don’t touch*.

They sat in silence, the only sound that of Will’s soft cries. Matthew grunted through his gag, and the sound made Hannibal tilt his head. He stared at the man for a few long moments.

“I am not interested in a friendship with you, Matthew. And Will never was.” He crouched his shoulders, leaning close into Will’s ear. “Do you have energy to move, Will?”

His breathing slightly hitched. If Hannibal had to guess, he was near comatose. “You can clean yourself. Gather your clothes.”

He stirred, awake enough to give a sharp, “I’ll wear them this time?”

“Yes.”

The mattress groaned as Will situated himself off Hannibal, and he turned to look at the man over his shoulder. Hannibal offered him nothing but indifference. A snake coiled deep in Will’s stomach, making heat rise and threatening to retch out his mouth. Will threw his hand to his face, not caring about the gashes, and wiped away any lingering teardrops. He stumbled his way over to the bathroom’s door, picking up his clothes one piece at a time. It was all he could handle, physically and emotionally. He ignored the two other men watching him. The ship of humiliation had found its island’s harbor, and it felt like Will had lived there for centuries. He glanced at the bathroom, deciding to not take the chance of any more surprises. He stayed out in the open.

Hannibal meanwhile tucked himself back in, straightening his pants. He set his legs off the bed’s edge, facing Matthew directly. As Will buttoned his shirt little ways across the room, Hannibal reached out to remover the gag from Matthew.

He immediately gasped and a tongue darted out to inspect the rug-burns along the ends of his mouth. Hannibal waited, tossing the damp rope on the floor.

“I-” he cracked a smile, “I made a mistake.”

It was spoken like a candid observation, as though he was wet and called attention to the rain. Matthew wasn't exactly sure what would happen next, but his own death was a great possibility. If he had to die, he wouldn't choose anything other than by the Ripper's own hand. Or Will's.

As Will shuffled on his jeans, noticing Hannibal standing from the corner of his eye. He glanced up, watching the exchange between both men.

"You will serve as a warning to others. You are not completely meaningless."

Will felt the bile return, swirling down below as extra saliva collected in his mouth. It was sudden. Hannibal swiped like a cunning beast, the pounce so quick it took Will a moment to realize he had something in his fist. The hand stayed pressed against Matthew's chest, but the blood inside him did not. The man choked immediately, eyes spasming and body reflexively contorting. Blood trickled down his mouth in thin lines. For a few seconds, Matthew was there, struggling, sputtering, reaching for any breath he could take. Then he wasn't, eyes dead and glossed over, unfocused on the ground. His body silent, save for the blood that continued to trail down his chest and chin.

Will froze, hands immobile at his jean's button. He stared at the red puddle in the orderly's lap, unsure to move or breathe as it may set Hannibal on a spree. Matthew's body slumped forward in the chair. Will had watched his eyes widen, his fingers spasm, then he watched everything go faint. Everything stop altogether. It wasn't there, but Will felt blood on his hands.

"You were excellent, Will." Hannibal walked over behind Matthew. He pulled the knife from Matthew's chest, knelt down, and removed the ropes around the dead man's ankles and torso. Soon, the man toppled forward, thudding to the floor like a forgotten doll.

One could recover from emotional trauma. Will unbuttoned his jean's clasp, watching as Hannibal casually set the knife on the nearby counter. *There was no coming back from death.* Matthew had suffered, the procession hadn't been slow. Will would have to make sure his own death was quick. Hannibal immediately sensed the tension. He stopped unrolling his sleeves, and looked offhandedly over at Will. *Interesting*.

"You are in no condition to express your anger, Will."

The man advanced anyway, and Hannibal allowed him to close the distance until the body of Matthew laid by their feet.

"I have…nothing left to lose, Hannibal." The motions were quick. Will was faster than Hannibal thought, knowing just where to reach for the butterfly knife. The struggle did not last long. Hannibal dodged a punch but his forearm was slashed. Will felt his face bleeding, but managed to tackle the other man to the floor in a last ditch effort. Both of them fell into the cramped space between the bed and the motel wall. Will pressed the blade against Hannibal's throat, his other hand holding down the man's dominant arm. Blood from a gash that had reopened dripped down on Hannibal's forehead.

The fraction of a moment Hannibal fought, and Will nicked his skin.

“Was his fate-” Hannibal craned his neck, “worth of the crime? Will? Was it justice?”

“Justice.” Will’s hair swept down to frame his face as he looked at Hannibal below him. “For you.”

“For *you*.” Hannibal corrected, searching for understanding in the other man’s eyes. “You belong to me, every piece of you. And Matthew took pieces I can never have.”

“I think he got the message.”

“But do you?”

Will stared, breathless, as Hannibal reached up to take Will’s face in his hand. Understanding was finally there, Hannibal could smell the altering perspective as Will continued to look at Hannibal, to really *see* him for what he was. His empathy disorder nearly made Will switch places with Hannibal, feeling something twisted, something foreign and dark that evolved to an admiration, a sort of affection psychopaths shouldn’t be able to feel; toward himself. Hannibal was a master of manipulation, but what Will saw in his eyes, what Hannibal allowed him to see beyond the person suit, was so genuine he forgot to breathe. Hannibal leaned in closer, and Will’s vision went white around the edges when he listened to the man inhale him.

“I love you. Will.”

If Hannibal said or did anything after, Will didn’t register it. His grip lost the knife and his mind welcomed the black out.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Will kills Hannibal with kindness. A truce is made.

Chapter Notes

So, in the current season (spoiler alert), Hannibal essentially gets caught because Will wanted to let go. In spirit of this messed up reversed psychology, I hope you enjoy this chapter.
And yes, for now at least, I am planning on this to be the finished story. Not sure if it's just writers block or lost of interest, but I don't *want* to plan future chapters if there aren't going to be any. But that doesn't eliminate the possibility!

Additional Note: I will be away for a week or two, apologizes if something is brought to my attention and I'm lacking a response.

Warning: Yet again for porn/smut.

The road sign was rusted, adding another layer of difficulty to read in the dark. The metal looked so old, matching the barren patch of road in its crumbling glory. The longer Hannibal drove, the more Will imagined they were in a forgotten piece of the country. He squinted faintly, reading *JEKH HILL 40* as the sign swept past the passenger window. A blurry, half-conscious conversation echoed in his head.

"Where are we going?"

"The destination does not matter."

Will continued to stare out the window, watching as old rain drops raced each other across the glass. The sky had been so dark when he woke two hours ago, and it took him a moment to realize it wasn't raining, but it had. He could still see the forest despite the night sky, and found comfort spying through trees at the faint horizon. He rested his forehead against the window, the cold a striking contrast against his sunburn. He missed the woods; the wild grass, poison ivy, dirty streams. Both the good and bad, he forgot how much an untamed territory could call to him, entice him to just walk inside and get lost. Even after a rain shower, with all the animals having long scurried away, it was peaceful.

Will leaned away from the view once more minutes passed, resting fully against his seat. He adjusted his sleeves, tugging them down more. The chill from the rain still had not relented. The scent of it even carried through the car, seeping through the air vents. He shuddered.

The tugging stopped when Will paused, watching as Hannibal reached for the center panel. He turned up the heat with a turn of his wrist.

Affection, a sort of untainted fondness wasn't possible with someone like Hannibal Lecter. The man didn't feel affection, not truly. Not without what people called cruel intentions. He was *beyond* attraction. Sexuality was just an inquisitiveness. Never beyond a means to get what he wanted, no gender ever mutually exclusive. "*I love you*" was just a tactic. Something to confuse and busy his head.

Well, it worked.

They passed another narrow, rusted sign. Who were reading these? Will glanced in the side-view mirror. They had been the only car as long as he had been awake.

"Are you hungry, Will?"

He couldn't stop the flinch before it happened. "No."

Hannibal glanced over at the other man, suspecting a lie.

"Really." Will grumbled out, tugging his sleeves even with hot air blowing against him. "Haven't had much of an appetite since the motel."

No cars, no shops or strip malls, not a gas station for miles. When Hannibal wanted to disappear, he really could. The country road must have stretched the entire state, the only light being the moon, which hung heavily by stars. Out in the open, away from civilization, it looked huge, taking up the entire sky. They really were the middle of nowhere.

Despite the growing heat in the car, Will warmed his hands by rubbing them against his jeans. "I'm surprised you trust me. I tried to kill you before I blacked out."

There was a single deer on the side of the road, and Hannibal turned on the high beams to scare it away. Cautious, but comfortable at his current speed. "Rope would irritate your already inflamed skin. And killing your driver wouldn't be wise."

Will couldn't help but take another look behind him at the backseat, thinking he'd find Matthew there. He wasn't. He was still in that motel, his corpse about to give some maid a heart attack. Will leaned back over to his door, resting an arm along the frame. He'd rather look outside at the forest then accept his reality. At least by looking, he could daydream it was just another road trip to a crime scene. A short drive to his house in Wolf Trap. A fishing trip expedition with Abigail.

Will's chest suddenly felt heavy, and although it was there was pleasant warmth in the car, he felt cold. His stomach rolled. The sudden electricity between both men could jumpstart a storm outside. Will turned his head just in time to catch Hannibal about to speak.

“Will, I’d like to discuss what happened in the motel room.”

“I don’t.”

“You’re in denial?” It was question he made seem innocent.

Will looked back out the window. His hand adjusted his seatbelt’s strap in edginess.

“I’m the closest thing you have to a friend.”

“Yeah.” Will scoffed, anger coursing through his features like a dormant volcano awakening. Hannibal could almost smell the firestorm smoke. “I bet I’m the closest thing you have. Must be lonely being a cannibal.”

Hannibal kept glancing over. It was obvious he wanted to focus on the other man much more intently, but driving at nightfall forced his eyes away. “You believe it would be easier if I was dead, because you could be safe from temptation. But that also means falling into a misery you could not come out from.”

“Temptation? I don’t want to be like you.”

“No. But you want this relationship, this bond we have.” Eyes looked over to gauge the reaction, the confusion wasn’t surprising. “You wish to go back to a time before the truth.”

Will continued to stare out the window, stubborn, but his eyes all-telling.

“You won’t kill me, Will. Because you don’t want to be alone. You don‘t want to be miserable.”

“Please stop.” Will dropped his arm so it landed on the door’s ledge. “I don’t want this.”

“You continue to lie-”

Will opened the door and unbuckled himself in one fluid motion. He fell limp out the car and rolled onto the street in a ball. The landing really hurt, only having done that once before as a policeman in New Orleans, and first few rolls sent a sharp pain through his shoulder. Will unraveled himself when his body lost momentum, and immediately he staggered to a stand. Another sign was close by, reading *JEKH HILL 30*. The car slowed right away, turning so its headlights blinded Will. Hannibal parked into the faded shoulder lane.

Will shook out the kinks of his body, standing his ground as he watched Hannibal ease out of the car. He stared at Will with a look of disenchantment, hands clasping the open car door as though asking Will; *Do I need to close this door? Walk to you? Are so you adamant with this pointless endeavor?* But Will didn’t move. Not as Hannibal slammed the door shut and slowly approached. Will instead let the hate run through him, legs parted and chest risen.

“I’m done, Hannibal.” He shouted across the diminishing distance. “I’m done. Either you drive away…or we finish this. Right now.”

“Can we talk in the car?”

“No, dammit. We’ll talk now.”

“Your injuries-”

“My injuries!” Will barked, his arms outstretched incredulity. “Stop trying to take care of me!” He decided to close the distance instead, eagerly shoving Hannibal as adrenaline surged through him. The atmosphere was charged with energy, Will’s hands couldn’t unball themselves.

“Your care is detrimental!” He landed a punch to Hannibal’s left cheek, watching as the man staggered slightly. Will felt a twinge of satisfaction until he realized Hannibal was just letting him release his anger.

The growl in his throat turned into a loud roar and Will continued to hit Hannibal; his chest, shoulder, face, again and again. The tussle made their hair slide into their eyes. Hannibal grunted only once, but he took each hit with a slight stumble where Will made sure to close the gap, both men closing in to the car’s hood.

“Is this more therapy, Hannibal?” He breathed, shouting. “I’m tired of your *friendship*.” He swung another punch, but missed and nearly lost his balance. “You *framed* me. Forced me to-” *eat people, experience the hands of another psychopath, debase myself constantly*- Will choked on the words he wanted to say, his next punch suddenly weak as he plunged forward. He hit Hannibal’s chest and decided to stay there, leaning against the man. He kept the tears at bay, trying to ignore the white noise that plagued his mind. He couldn’t help it. He needed the comfort. Needed the man he had just used as a stress ball.

“W-why? Why this?….Why…the hospital…Matthew…”

Hannibal gently grasped Will’s chin, forcing him to look up from his chest. Will saw that his cheek was already red, a bruise would take its place by tomorrow. The pain had done nothing to him. Hannibal’s thumb stroked his chin.

“You’re unique, Will. And it is your uniqueness that astounds me. You are the only person I’ve ever come across who is not only *aware* that my game exists, but you can play it too.” His eyes were searching again, searching as they did in the motel. He brought Will in close, his hands on the man’s sunburnt, scratched face. Even damaged by another he was still a masterpiece, hanging on Hannibal’s words and being the only one who could ever understand him. Reject him.

“I want you to keep playing, Will. With me.” He leaned down and drew himself in for a kiss.

Immediately, Will knew this kiss was a different breed from the one in the motel. That one had been entertainment for Matthew, it had been controlling, domineering and cold. This kiss made Will’s world hazy. It was honest desire, unadulterated tenderness. He nipped at Will’s lower lip, though Will kept his mouth persistently shut, in both defiance and surprise. It was a skilled kiss as he traced Will’s mouth with his tongue in a wild abandon that told him Hannibal had nothing to lose. He had laid his cards on the table during those last conscious seconds in the motel.

When Hannibal pulled away, Will wanted to destroy the small, satisfied smile on his mouth.

-keep playing, Will-

Will fisted his hands in Hannibal's suit and pulled him down for another kiss. The other man didn't feign surprise or shyness and he bent down to meet Will squarely. Now their jaws worked as tongues slid against and passed each other. Lips crushed together. It was skill with no limitations held back, pure passion. They kissed like they fought. Teeth nipped at lips, small traces of saliva trailing between them as they smashed against each other. Will gave off a low sound into Hannibal's mouth, like a dog's warning growl, and his tongue explored every inch. He scrounged up every trick he knew, using his motions to make Hannibal the receiver, make him the compliant participant. Will kissed Hannibal determined to make the other man whine, to make him lose his reserve with goddamn *honest* emotion. Will discovered a new way to fight the monster, one without punches. One just as dangerous.

Will pulled away just as Hannibal did, panting, but his hands still held onto the fabric of the navy blue waistcoat. His face was just inches from Will's. His eyes were busy, heated.

"I did not want Matthew to see my feelings for you. Not entirely." Hannibal said breathlessly. "Something so exceptional is just between the both of us."

Will used his grip on Hannibal and shoved him backwards, against the front of the car's hood. The thud made the entire vehicle bounce. Will felt deliciously powerful, drunk, as he held the doctor below him by his lapels.

"Revenge is sweet, as they say" Hannibal grunted, trying to shift his lower back against the car's exterior, "but it does leave behind a taste of bitterness. Tell me, will you do to me what I have done to you?"

"No." Hannibal's indifferent face in the motel flashed in Will's mind. *A confession of love...*Will would put that to the test. A soft smirk ghosted his face, and he pressed Hannibal harder against the metal. "Not exactly."

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"They're in this together, Jack. Can't you see? Are you so in denial about your prized profiler you chose to blind yourself? You made slips in judgment with other agents. How is this any different?"

Chilton's words rang clear in Jack's head. They echoed in the man's office when he spoke them, in the car after Jack took the helicopter to the scene, and they echoed unmistakably when Jack stepped into the room. It was difficult to believe such a theory. All three men working together. It was an implausible and a far-fetched dream of a hospital director who wanted nothing short of a circus attraction in his building.

It was even more aggravating to accept the possibility of the man being right.

A crime of passion, that was what the hotel manager described it to the local police. Jack understood that now, scanning the room as his team moved inside from behind him. He got a

quick rundown of the investigation from a policeman before the local unit would leave. It was an official federal issue now.

No one noticed a car parked in front of the motel room. The manager could describe a tall man with light-colored hair, and not much else. It was a crooked establishment, the employee admitting to not taking identification or even a signature. For a room key, all a man needed was cash.

“The jugular veins have been severed.” Beverly was the first to approach Jack when he entered the room. “With the color of his skin, looks like he was bled dry. And that was done *prior* to the disembowelment.”

Maybe the three men had, at some point, worked together. But that was unlikely now. Given the blood bath.

“How can you tell?”

“Blood didn’t pool in the abdominal cavities. Enough isn’t visible on the exposed organs.”

Jack looked down at the body, it sitting against the foot of the bed with the hands loosely clasped in its lap.

“Well, that’s a problem.” Jim swept passed Jack, having arrived on the same plane. “Where was he bled out?”

“Why do you ask?”

“The blood in this room is primarily on the walls,” Jim pointed out. “There are some dots I see on the carpet, like someone was standing with a nosebleed, but that’s not enough. The amount is staged.” He shook his head. “Our boy didn’t have his throat cut in this room.”

Only a moment passed before all eyes landed on the bathroom. The short walk confirmed what they thought.

“He bled him in the tub.” Beverly said. “He cleaned thoroughly....but I bet there’s blood in the drain. He used this as his palette.”

“And the walls his canvas.” Jack sighed.

“If that’s true,” Alana appeared behind them in the doorway, making her entrance, “then whoever killed Matthew *carried* him. And the same man also killed Todd Wilson.”

Jack looked at Price. “How tall would you say Dr. Lecter is? Six feet?”

“Uh...six or six-one. Probably weights, what, one-sixty?”

Alana scrunched her face. “You still serious about Hannibal? Jack-”

“He’s not answering his phone.” The man reasoned. “Zeller called to report the house is empty. And Hannibal contacted his clients, cancelling appointments after *I* called *him*. I have

to keep an open mind, Alana."

Jim eased the tension by shrugging. "Dr. Lecter is tall *and* strong. He could easily maneuver Matthew over the tub."

"Of course, there could have been an extra set of hands." Beverly look to Jack. "Will. If he never planned his own escape from the hospital, maybe he was okay with this happening."

Jack walked back into the larger room, looking at the artistry of blood on the walls and ceiling. In some places it was splashed, like an artist tossed a bucket of paint. But there were particulars as well. Languid strokes and streaks. The most obvious thing about it is that it was everywhere.

"The blood is important." Jack noted. Alana joined him, studying.

"It's the message. Matthew upset his killer. And the killer wanted everyone to know. That's why he left the body here too."

"What message is that, exactly?" Beverly asked.

"Hard to tell. There are too many paradigms when it comes to blood. But, for the sake of argument, let us consider Dr. Lecter. What would he see the blood as?"

"Blood is used to tell the future…it's life…you can drink blood, perform rituals, create with it..." Jack rambled, ending with a rub of his temple. "If he is the ripper, he didn't take anything. Matthew was disemboweled, but every organ is present."

"He was mad that Matthew took Will." Alana looked away, a bitterness in her mouth. "It spoiled his plan to keep him in prison. Assuming...Hannibal framed Will in the first place."

Jack gestured to Jim, who was busy photographing some of the blood splatter. "I need this entire room checked for prints."

A heat grew behind Alana's eyes, and it was hard to swallow, as she watched Jack leave the room. Walls suddenly felt suffocating, the blood nauseating, and she followed him out the door. "Jack, if this *is* the Ripper, if this *is* Hannibal, he's smart. We won't find any."

"Will's smart too."

Outside, there was a bustle of activity. Local reporters and news vans swept the side of the road and areas of the parking lot police and agents were not using, nor had taped off. A small back-road county rarely got commotion, let alone a murder. Patrons at a nearby diner fled as soon as they were done being questioned, disgruntled by the mayhem the *city folk* brought to their quiet haven. Jack shoved his hands into his pockets, taking a glance of a newspaper one of the reporters waved in the air, trying to get the attention of an officer. The headline read *RIPPER ESCAPED.*

"Creativity is Lounds's specialty." Alana stood by her friend, the crisp red trench over her shoulders a stark contrast to the neighboring agents' black. "The Ripper's of Hanover."

“The two guys in the 1920’s..." Jack thought back to his academy days, grimacing, "...who ran off together on a murdering spree?”

“The same.” Alana eyed some forensic personnel trading places in the room's doorway, careful in the already cramped space. There were no other cars in the parking lot save for the useless manager's. No recent tire marks. A man found what looked to be kicked up dirt behind the building, as though someone tried to hide tire impressions, as thought someone had parked there, but no one could be sure. That heat roared behind her eyes again, her stomach knotted. “The trail runs cold, Jack.”

“What do you mean?”

“Unless Will drew us a map and hid it somewhere, we have no idea where they went. It’s a rough estimate, but forensics think Matthew Wayne died about eight hours ago. That’s enough time, by car, to get halfway across the state.”

She allowed the fact to sink in between them both. A chilly gust of air gently swayed wisps of her dark hair. A shaky sigh followed.

“Someone will slip up,” she contradicted herself, “Someone has to. This isn’t how either of them would act.”

Jack turned to his side, “Your theory about Matthew disrupting Dr. Lecter’s scheme. Let’s go with that.” Alana mouth downturned. “It makes both men playing everything by ear. We won’t know where they go, because *they* don’t know. We just have to take this one step at a time. Wait for a tip. Both their faces are on national news. It's hard to hide anywhere this decade."

The pain in her voice was evident as she forced out the word, “Right.”

Dr. Bloom was a strong woman, earned her status as a reputable doctor through relentless willpower and renowned skill. But, just like Jack, she never prepared herself for something like this. Textbooks didn't cover on what to do when a close friend was suffering, when someone you thought you knew betrayed you in the most deepest of ways. The moment Will was incarcerated at the mental hospital, Alana began to mourn, to lose her reserve. That was the viewing, this was the funeral.

Jack went against procedural protocol, against the scrutiny of surrounding agents, and brought Alana into his arms with a loose but comforting hug. “Hannibal isn’t going to kill him.”

Alana choked on a sob, recalling the episode of tears she endured, privately, in her car just minutes before arriving on the scene. Hannibal *not* killing Will was what she was afraid of. Will had tried to warn her, and she didn't listen. Now Hannibal would only return Will if he broke, but she knew the man always took care of his belongings.

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Will pushed his hips against Hannibal hard enough for it to not be a mistake, his hands smoothing down the man's sides.

"Stay." Those same hands and hips pressed the other man against the car's front and Hannibal stared, curious, but complied. Mischief wasn't in Will's eyes, but something akin to it swept over the brown irises as they traveled down and assessed Hannibal's submission to the game.

A pair of surprisingly strong, dexterous fingers roamed the length of Hannibal's thighs. The doctor knew Will had more strength than his body appeared to have, and it was invigorating to see, to *feel* the dominating drive.

As Hannibal leaned against the car, Will could feel the muscles of Hannibal's legs relax a little at his touch. He spread the man's thighs so he could settle between him, propping a knee on the car's front bumper so he could stretch over the languid length of Lecter and unbutton his waistcoat. His fingers wrapped around Hannibal's hips, his hands brushing upwards and pressing lightly. This was going to be the hardest part of the lure. While Hannibal had taken the quickest way in the motel for submission, Will was experimenting with the opposite. And that could be deadly with a predator beyond definition. His touches were purposely light, like a feather-duster, making the skin tingle beneath the shirt and a pleasing sensation evoke within the beast. Hannibal actually moved closer toward him, pressing his thighs against the smaller man's waist, and Will allowed the arrangement as he slipped off the waist coat with a small smile.

With a strengthening satisfaction, Will noticed how his fingers ghosting across the edges of Hannibal's hipbones made the muscles his stomach flex reluctantly, how his steady breathing against Hannibal's neck made him exhale slightly.

Hannibal narrowed his eyes, watching as Will pressed his face to his chest, and Hannibal latched his hands on the car so Will couldn't force him to sit. But then Will trailed a line of soft kisses up the dress-shirt, along the collarbone, only stopping just underneath his Adam's apple. His lips loitered, brushing against peach fuzz as hot breath trickled against the man's throat. Then suddenly the mouth became a leach and *sucked*.

Hannibal's eyes thinned until they shut. Will attacked his throat, able to hear the most minuscule intake of air at the abrupt action. Will pulled them closer by balling some of the shirt's fabric in his hand --vaguely processing that Hannibal began to melt against him, or else he wouldn't allow such a dishonor to his shirt--, switching between small, tender licks and potent sucks. He played a dangerous game, but took the risk and moved his hips against a growing heat between Hannibal's legs. Working the man's neck, Will's hands roamed across Hannibal's back, his fingers outlining the indents of his shoulder blades, sliding down to the crease of his spine, floating over the fabric unhurried.

Will *was* taking his time, sneaking hands under the dress-shirt and feeling the warm smooth skin, areas covered in light hairs, firm muscles quivering but yielding. Will took a moment to leave the neck blossoming with marks, glancing at the faint contractions in Hannibal's face, captivated. Though the man was still standing, arms still propping his weight on the car's hood, it was hard to miss the shivers in the complete picture. Will could sense it, feel

Hannibal's confusion as his entire body yearned for the gentle touch. How had Will been so distracted to never realize the power he wielded?

His hands continued to wander, watching as Hannibal arched slightly before regretting it, as he gently pressed against Will for friction, as his hands tensed on the hood.

Will slowly unbuttoned the shirt as his mouth went back to the neck, feeling how warm Hannibal's body suddenly became. He sucked over Hannibal's steady pulse, feeling a stutter, and he eased the sleeves off him, tugging at the fabric softly until they slipped off broad shoulders and arms. Will experimented with his influence, running his tongue across Hannibal's jaw line as he tossed the shirt somewhere behind Hannibal, watching as it landed on the car's roof. Hannibal did nothing but slowly exhale, not wanting to disrupt the near musical rhythm of Will's hands and the twirling pink muscle currently tracing the contours of his jaw. Now came the true test.

Will hands left the man's upper torso the same time his mouth pulled away. He leaned back from Hannibal's neck, his body easing down on its knees. Hannibal opened his eyes, his gaze both malicious and mildly flustered. He recognized the position Will was transitioning into, but he wanted to believe the moonlight was just creating odd shadows.

Will slowly traveled down the length of Hannibal, forcing the man's ass to meet the car's hood as his hands stroked up and down his thighs. He pressed into Hannibal, nipping at his bare chest with teeth. His mouth traveled down to his navel, tongue circling around it before heading down. Knees hit the road. The sound, the implication, wasn't lost on Hannibal. And he felt his long-practiced restrain crack. Will's mouth, the devishly proficient thing, teased the sensitive skin between Hannibal's hipbones, warm hands grasping his pant's waistline, inching them down with every unsteady breath that was forced from Hannibal's throat.

Will caught the wince that graced Hannibal the moment a hand resting just above his waist moved languidly over the hardening erection. He softly massaged the length through the pants, fingers cupping Hannibal while a skilled tongue kept lingering in the most sensitive parts of his abdomen. Hannibal's chin rose, head falling back just slightly. He was sitting on the hood, legs draped around Will, elbows digging into the car as he stubbornly supported himself to a half-stand.

Will hooked a hand at Hannibal's waist before fingers slid down, digging through the expensive fabric of his pants and squeezed the stiff flesh. The touch grew firmer and more sensual with each second. Hannibal's thighs spread just a little more without Will's doings, and he leaned back, arching against the wet lips that burned into his skin. He bit into his tongue, at the inside of his cheek, discomfort and unease sweeping within him like an dust storm --if he wanted to lean away from Will, he *couldn't*. If he wanted to force himself away from the perversely slow tongue that just kept on creeping over him savage and sweet, he couldn't. The heat rose, the sensation spread. It made his insides tingle, made his muscles useless as his head fell back, hissing. He tried not to roll his hips against the meticulous hand. He wouldn't give Will that much.

But Will pulled away and *crawled* on top of Hannibal, like a sensuous feline, wedging a knee between his thighs. He stroked Hannibal's hair gently, unafraid to further tousle the stunned predator, smiling at how the other man's eyelids fluttered shut, how his lips slightly parted.

Will was warm, solid against him, a force of reckoning as he promised so long ago. Will bent down over him and kissed Hannibal. It was a telling kiss, one laced with sugar and unsettling sweetness. It was coma inducing as Will memorized Hannibal's lips with his tongue, tracing the soft ridges with small licks like a cat at a milk dish. It was an adorable kiss, one that drove Hannibal mad.

It was near agony. Torture. Will was cruel and Hannibal loved it.

He grunted, sliding against Will's leg in a lithe, sensual movement as the warm tongue slipped inside his mouth, snaking around his own in a coy manner. Something began to snap in the back of his mind. The overwhelming, almost alien tenderness he was subjected to went against everything he knew with Will. It took over his body in a constant surge of warmth, filling him with unparalleled dread. It was the danger that came with having something, the risk of caring for something, *someone* so deeply. He would never let this man go even if the world threatened to swallow him whole.

Hannibal refused to look at Will again, despite the coaxing kisses Will scattered over his face. He didn't dare to reach and pull him closer despite the burning need. He couldn't tolerate it, and he craved it to end while praying for it to continue and repeat again and again.

He writhed, the lean thigh between his legs being replaced with despicable fingers undoing his pants. They slid inside, smoothing over the silk briefs while the enthusiastic mouth claimed his throat again. Will pulled back only a little, a pink across the bridge of his nose and cheeks, before pressing back. His tongue hit against a pulsating juncture, licking wantonly, crudely. Will began to ease down again. Hannibal felt his hands press into the car, teeth baring while Will's lips roamed down his torso, occasionally stopping at sensitive spots, but their destination became more and more obvious as the fingers dipped beneath his waistband and pulled his pants down a little more.

Will knew about the control Hannibal placed over himself. But now he knew about the effect he had on Hannibal.

Hannibal all but squirmed. They were both a little sore after the day's events, but it didn't diminish the need for contact whatsoever. He just laid still, exposed, trying to calm his composure in vain.

Will knelt in front of him again, eyes wandering over the rising chest, sliding down the firm planes of his abdomen, marveling in the sight of peach skin stretched over muscles as they gave away even the smallest twitch. Hannibal's eyes opened slowly, and their gazes locked on each other.

Hannibal knew he couldn't hide what he felt. He faltered a little, in awe at the way Will looked at him with both threat and desire, tranquil affection mixing into brutality in a fluid motion. Will was *looking* at him, fully and completely. No nervousness was there. Something settled in his stomach, growing as he watched Will slink down without taking his eyes off him, his lips parting.

Will ran his teeth down the front of Hannibal's black briefs, feeling the cock twitch through the layer of cloth. Will smiled up at him, licking the bulge through the underwear. Hannibal

knew a flush rose on his face, and immediately brought a hand up to bite into flesh, regaining some sort of rule. His sunk teeth in the space of his thumb and forefinger as Will began to mouth Hannibal's cock through the thin fabric, tongue tracing the length as he felt it throbbing and hot. The fabric grew a little damp with precum, and Will took the cue and hooked fingers around the waistband. He looked up at Hannibal, pausing.

"Will…" the words just barely escaped his lips, but it was difficult to tell if it had been a warning or request. He couldn't look at the other man, positive the sight would make him release right then.

"Ask for this," Will's voice rattled down the other man's spine, the man's breath ghosting Hannibal's length and he couldn't fight the shiver. Will's voice was not his own; it was seductive, inviting.

Hannibal let go of his hand, beads of blood emerging from the base of his thumb, and faint traces of red on his top lip. He exhaled, feigning poise, attempting a dignified, "Please, Will."

Will's nails raked against skin as he tugged the briefs down, the small grazes leaving faint red lines in their wake. Hannibal's cock sprung against Will's cheek, demanding attention as it twitched. Heartlessly, Will only breathed on it, fingers ghosting through a small bushel of light-colored curls. Hannibal exhaled through his nose, exasperated, until Will leaned closer down, his tongue appreciating Hannibal's hip bones, licking like some kind of woodland creature. The man was impossible. He blew again at the erection, looking at the head dripping with white liquid. He kissed the tip, spreading saliva, looking up at Hannibal's deteriorating composure through his lashes.

He ascended down the stiff length, sucking gently, treating every inch with wicked meticulousness. They moaned at the same time, one stifled and desperate, the other primal and deliberate. His tongue snaked and teased the base of Hannibal's cock before it slid up in a leisurely stroke, snaking and swirling around the head repeatedly. Hannibal hissed, his chest losing its breath. The sight of Will, the sinister affection in his eyes, the obscenely horrible and gentle way he savored him; sucking, kissing, licking.

Hannibal felt himself collapse, all the remaining thoughts, restraint whisked away. He wasn't sure if the mantra of curses left his mouth, or if they were just something roaring inside his head. He felt himself shiver against Will, the faintest sound of a chaste moan slip pass his mouth. Uneasiness swept over him at the thought of looking down.

Will looked up, slipping two of his fingers into his mouth, and saw Hannibal practically sprawled on the hood, head tossed back, a light pink color spreading to his neck. He looked to be in pain, but Will knew otherwise. His tongue slicked the digits with saliva before withdrawing.

The angle of the car's subtle incline made it easy for Will to aim. And when a slippery finger slowly eased inside, a sudden jolt of electricity stilled Hannibal. The waves of the wonderful, almost foreign sensation kept him immobilized as the finger quickly found his prostate, moving teasingly while the warm mouth closed around him, stealing breath out of his lungs. Will closed his eyes as the weight settled heavy on his tongue and he eased his finger in and

out, completely enraptured with the thought of having the man at his mercy with just his fingers and mouth. He had made the Chesapeake Ripper rejoin the human race.

Hannibal felt the soft back of Will's throat brush against the tip of his cock over and over. Heartless fingers from one hand rubbed insistently, making him *squirm* against the car as the other set moved in and out of him. He felt a pressure behind his eyes, building. His hips pushed back, head pressing against the windshield. His trimmed nails chipped away at some of the car's paint. His teeth bared, grinding as he tried to silence a groan he couldn't control. He didn't have control of anything. He felt a stray tear trail down his cheek. His legs tightened around Will, and he could feel Will's fingers leave his ass, going someplace else. He rocked his body gently in accord with the quick, unrelenting rhythm of Will's mouth and stroking hand. Hannibal bit down harder and another tear escaped his eye. Hannibal felt Will's other hand brush against his leg, moving in a familiar motion. The realization that Will was masturbating while driving him to the brink of insanity flooded through Hannibal's entire body with a painful heat. He felt the first intense tingles of an intoxicating orgasm.

His breath hitched, he hissed. Another tear.

It detonated at the bottom of his spine, the surge crawling underneath his skin until it consumed him entirely. He coiled, letting out a shout, arms tensing and coming down to wrap possessively around Will's neck. He moaned when he felt Will relax his throat even further, sucking him harder and dry.

Feeling Hannibal *shiver*, Will swallowed him to the root. His throat stretched to accommodate, taking a sharp inhale through his nose. Shortly after, Will reached his own release and the soft sound of his whine made Hannibal's wave of aftershocks almost as powerful as the orgasm itself.

Hannibal thought it was over as he laid down in defeat, but that mouth didn't want to leave his body alone. After swallowing, and working his jaw to ease an ache, Will placed a light kiss to the tip of Hannibal's cock before tucking it back inside his pants. He sent a wet trail of kisses up the middle of Hannibal's stomach, each one of them spurring warm tingles.

Hannibal opened his eyes, facing his oppressor. He couldn't stand how peaceful Will looked, how his head lowered coyly, how the warm and soft lips found the corners of Hannibal's lips. Those same lips nuzzling and kissing with a devastating adoration. They moved over his mouth, coddling it with a disturbing cuteness. Hannibal snarled.

He sprung up. He tackled Will over to his back, bestriding him. Powerful hands pinned docile arms to the car, denting the exterior. He plunged down and claimed the source of his growing exasperation, his vicious tongue pushing all the way down the throat that had sent him over the edge of desire. He bit at the parting lips, drawing blood but not drawing any sort of sound, not even a wince.

Hannibal pulled away, beaten. Conquered. The grip on Will's injured wrists weakened, and he watched, mouth slacking, as Will slipped a hand between Hannibal's, interlacing their fingers. The games were over, the hospital was over, their friends were not useful nor of value anymore. They were done, but not by the manhunt for them, the news of them escaping together; they were done because of each other. Hannibal was unraveled because of Will.

He felt a second sense of dread overcome him, numbing his mix of anger and admiration. Will's design had been deadly.

The men fixed on each other's eyes, both unable to veer away. Hair sprawled along the car's exterior, Will's mouth curled up a little, his lips a triumphant smile, but his eyes were remarkably tender. His free hand came up to wipe away a lingering tear.

"This was your punishment, Hannibal."

- - - - - - - - - - -

Some time later

They laid against the windshield of the car, legs stretched along the hood. Early morning light began to peek through trees of the forest, warming small bruises Hannibal felt blossoming on his neck. He slid his gaze down Will's sleeping form, eyeing the way their bodies aligned so perfectly against each other. There was no misplaced limb or ill-fitting angle making the position awkward. His arm was wrapped around Will, tucking the man's head in the crook of his shoulder.

They were comfortable. Hannibal felt alive. Will was just content to shut his eyes, attempting to shrug off what they were doing. He was too tired to oppose his body's fight for comfort. He felt Hannibal's eyes on him, and just nestled closer into the man's neck so his own were hidden.

Hannibal looked at Will's face despite the angle, knowing that nobody else in the world would ever adore seeing that face as much as he did in that moment; nobody would ever appreciate it enough. Will was his. Will Graham was his. Everything that they were was his.

"We shouldn't stay here much longer." A mumble broke through the silence.

Hannibal exhaled, feeling Will's breath against his neck, and he searched the sky for lingering constellations to appease himself. "Cappella dei Brancacci. A chapel of the early Renaissance. I would like to show you the same paintings I admired as a young man."

"You…want to show me Florence?"

Hannibal could feel the crack of a disbelieving smile against him. A hand swept to soothe Will's hair, feeling the spot he had to hack away in order to tear off the muzzle.

"You caught the Chesapeake Ripper, Will. I think you're due for retirement."

There was no escaping Hannibal. No escaping his own tainted name from the media and possibly his friends. Will brought himself closer to the single source of heat which was Hannibal's body, it also serving as a source of torment, of familiarity. A slow exhale of air compressed his chest. He never denied Hannibal, and that record wouldn't stop now. They both knew that. A boat without an anchor would overturn at sea, and Will knew he couldn't live his life without Hannibal, and vice versa.

He fell asleep to a white noise filling his head, Hannibal’s touch soothing his hair.

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